MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

AL BIGLEY
HOW TO BECOME
A SUCCESSFUL
COMICS ARTIST

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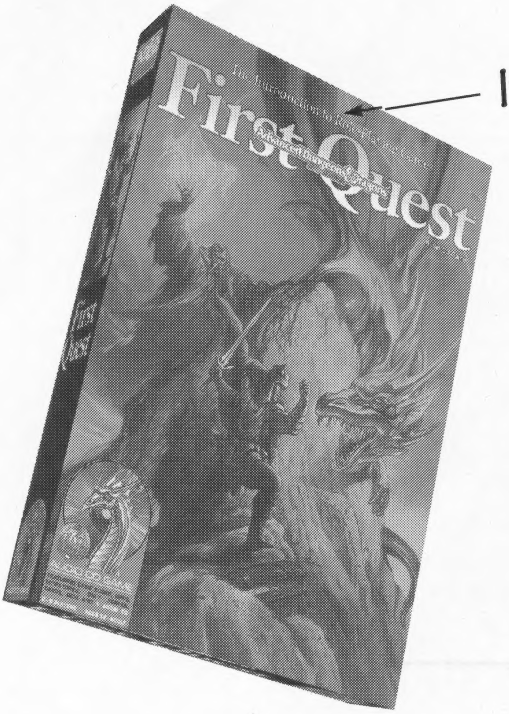

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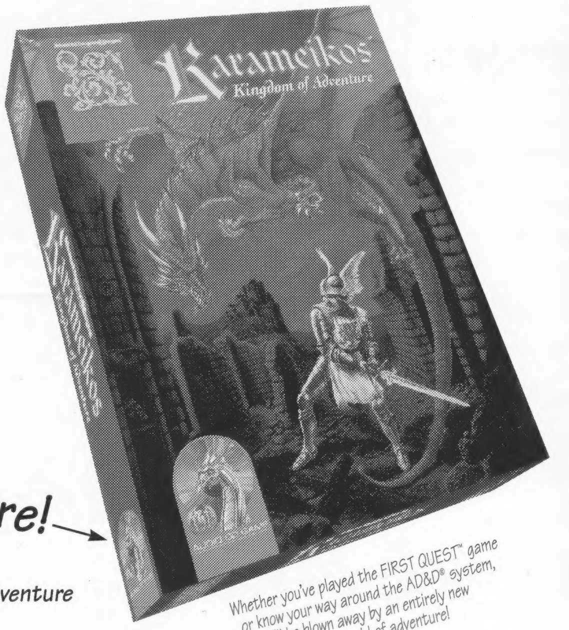

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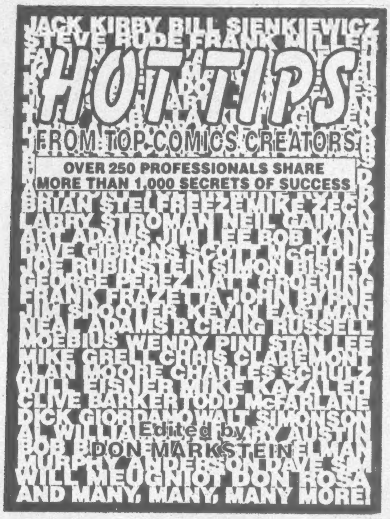
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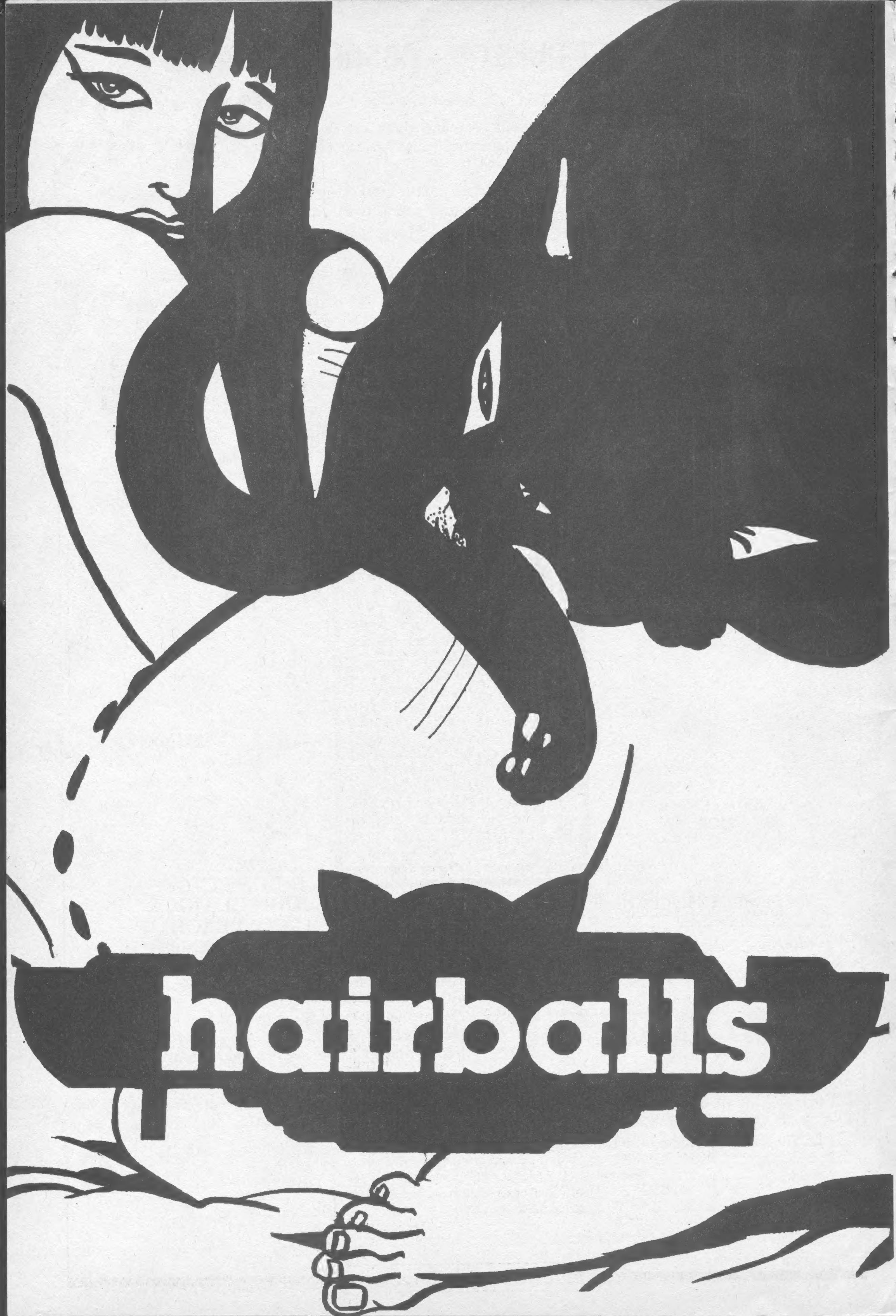
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cover:
AL BIGLEY
art

JRM
colors

UP FRONT

Several months ago, my brother was in town for some family business. I let his 5-year-old son play games on my computer while I made some phone calls. One of them was to **John Clark,** editor at Gladstone/Hamilton — I call John every two or three weeks just "to see what's what and where's where" (and to make sure no opportunities to cadge a scripting assignment get past me). In the "license any properties lately?" part of the conversation, he mentioned MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS.

Hard as it is to believe today, I had to ask John to repeat the name a couple of times, and finally to spell it. When I read it back to him, the tiny hand that had been manipulating my computer's mouse suddenly went still.

Within five minutes of hanging up, I'd received a breathlessly-delivered complete rundown on kidvid's hottest property, courtesy of my young nephew. What a coincidence, I thought, that a member of my own family is interested in these characters.

I had no idea, then, that practically any 5-year-old in the U.S. would have responded the same way.

By the time I'd written a half-dozen or so scripts for the title, I'd been mobbed and lionized by my children's schoolmates, delivered a talk on the Power Rangers to a Girl Scout group, and scheduled a four-store comic-book signing tour.

Of course, it wasn't **Don Markstein** getting this treatment — it was the guy writing POWER RANGERS comics, *whoever* that might happen to be.

I was finally beginning to realize how big a thing I'd gotten in on.

But as fine as it feels to bask in the reflected glory of the Power Rangers, there's one thing about this writing assignment that I like even better — and that's the chance to write a genuine, honest-to-goodness *superhero* comic book, the kind I used to read when I was a kid. You know, one of those things where stalwart, upright, optimistic folks put on fancy outfits and sally forth cheerfully to do mighty battle with despicable villains.

Not many comics like that around these days, are there?

Maybe comics publishers should take a look outside our little community, and see what kind of superheroes are popular in the rest of the world.

— Don Markstein

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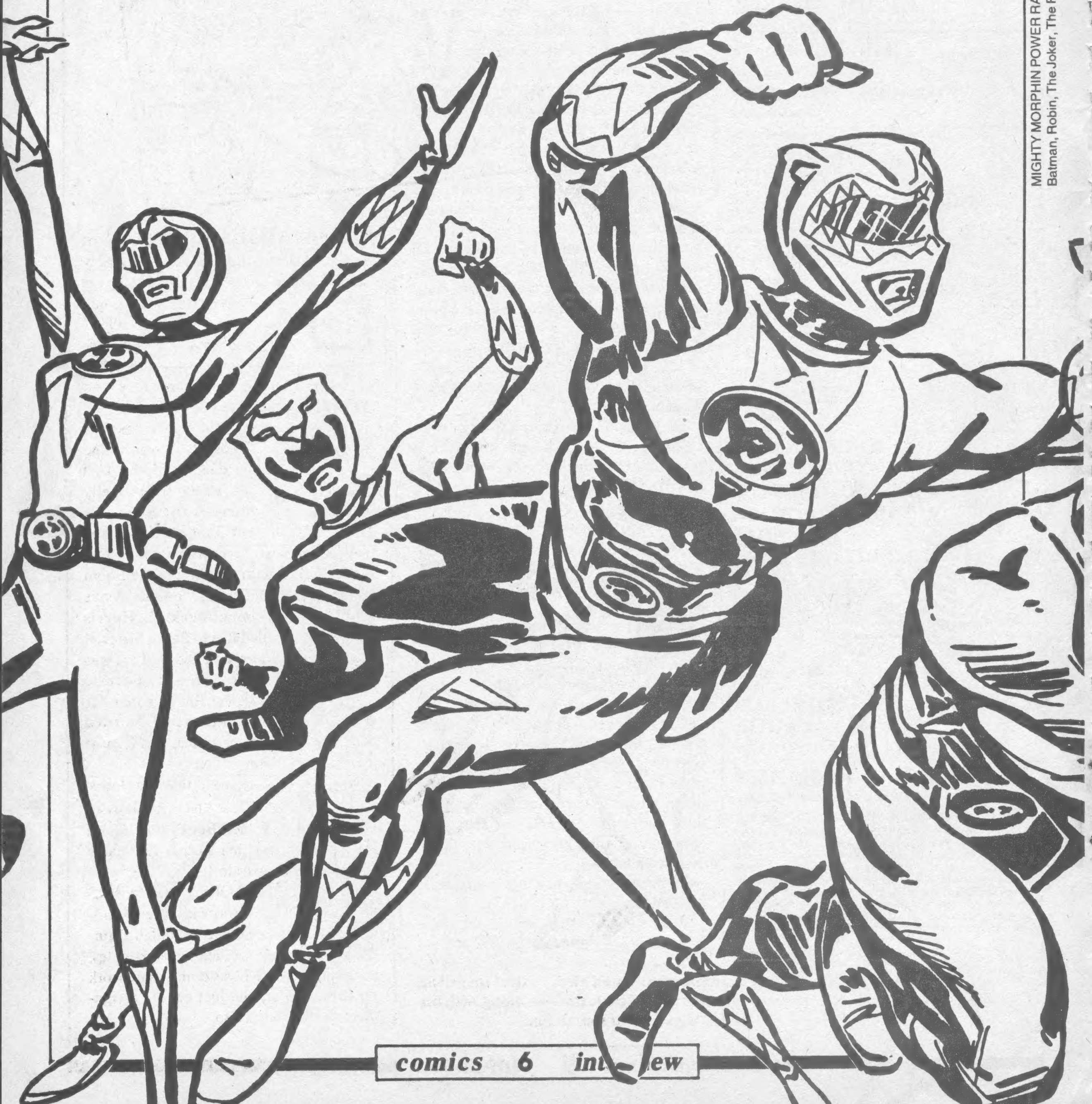
Summer of '93: "MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER

AL BIGLEY

Al Bigley, one of the pencillers of the MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS comic book, has quite an impressive resumé. He has worked on everything from BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES Happy Meal boxes for McDonald's to GHOST WRITER for the Children's Television Workshop to the MICHAEL JORDAN COMIC BOOK for Beckett. Al is also a stay-at-home dad for his young son, Dolan, and an inspiration to artists taking a non-studio approach to comics. He talked with Sandra Dincher about some of his experiences . . .

SANDRA DINCHER: *How did you start getting involved with POWER RANGERS?*

AL BIGLEY: I guess my association with the people at Gladstone and Hamilton Comics came about in 1990, I think, or 1991, when I did some material for their now-defunct horror line. They



MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS TM & © 1994 Saban International Services, Inc./
Batman, Robin, The Joker, The Penguin, Catwoman, Two-Face & Phantasm ©1994 DC

RANGERS — of course, I never heard of it.”

Comics, Inc. / Scarlet Witch TM & ©1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

were doing some horror magazines.

SANDRA: *Disney was doing horror?*

AL: Well, actually, it was an imprint of **Bruce Hamilton.** It was Hamilton Comics material. These were black-and-white magazines, called GRAVE TALES and MAGGOTS —

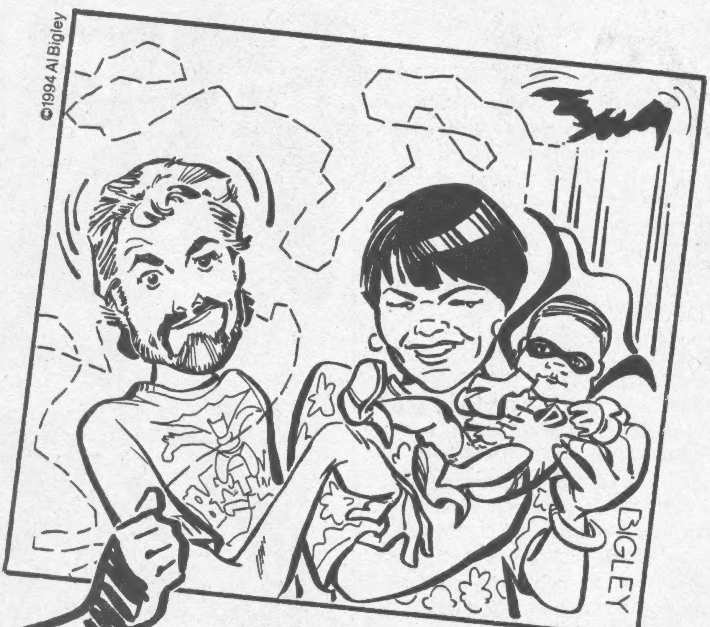
SANDRA: (Laughter.)

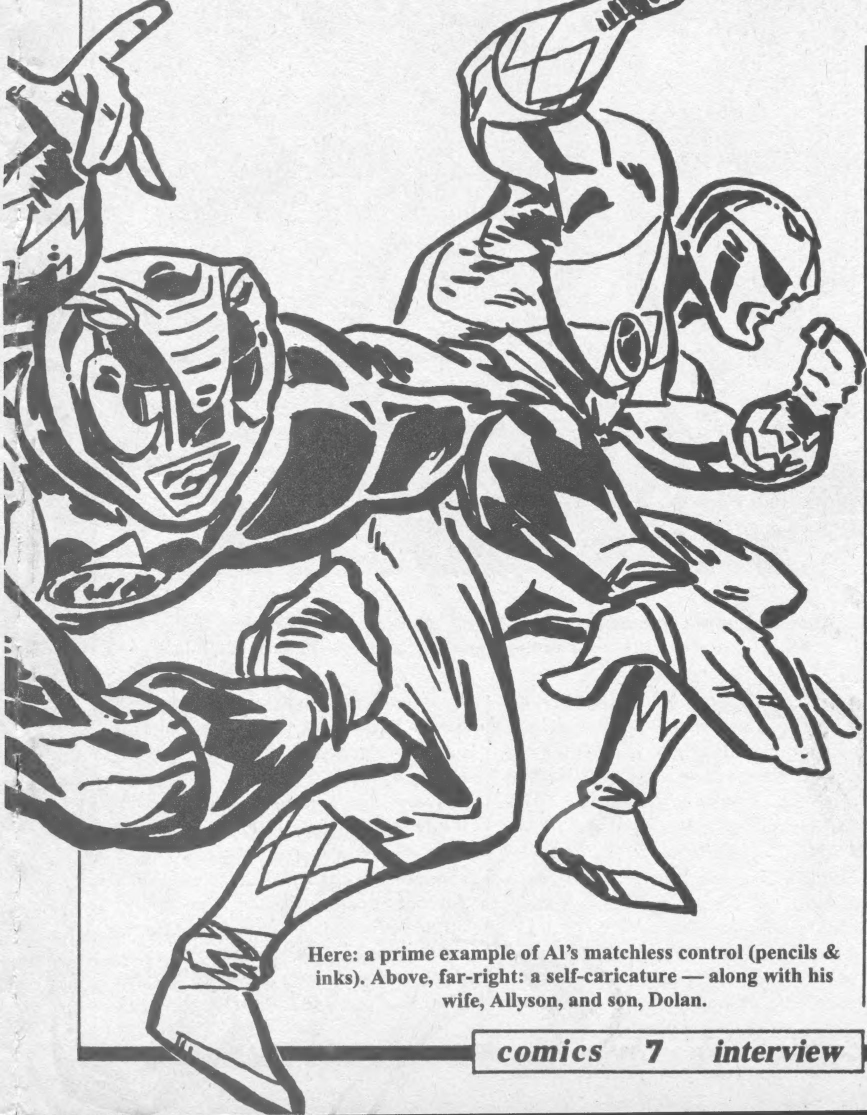
AL: I'm serious! See, nobody saw these, because I think of course at magazine size they weren't put out with comics. I saw them in plenty of magazine stores. And they were using people like **Gray Morrow** and **Joe Staton** and whatnot. And I did a story that was for MAGGOTS #4, I believe. And it only reached the pencil/lettering stage and the magazine was cancelled.

Gary Leach at Gladstone was impressed enough with my work that he would keep in touch with me over the next few years, and called me last summer to tell me there was going to be a comic book based on a new show called MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS — of course, I never heard of it; this was early summer of '93. And I thought it was something to do with computer-generated cartoons, because the CRASH TEST DUMMIES was done that way on television. I was totally confused — they were just *maybe* running the commercials for it at that time.

I was just excited to have, you know, a regular book. Of course, I was doing other freelance material. And the first project we did — when they finally ironed out everything with Saban, the owners of the Power Rangers — the first thing I did was a give-away comic that was packaged with the Fruit of the Loom Power Rangers underwear for kids. It was a little 8-page comic. **Jack C. Harris** wrote it. I pencilled it, and **Steve Stiles,** if I remember correctly, inked it. That was in December of last year, and of course that was the first Power Rangers item for **Hamilton** that I did. In January, I started pencilling the regular series, and I guess it went from there.

Now, a totally separate thing is, I also do a lot of POWER RANGERS activity books for the Golden Books line. Those are just now reaching stores. That came out just as a separate thing. They were jumping on the POWER RANGERS bandwagon. And I'd already been familiarized with the characters through **Hamilton.** I just sent Golden some samples, because of course I was doing some work for them earlier, and just got the assignment from Golden also.





Here: a prime example of Al's matchless control (pencils & inks). Above, far-right: a self-caricature — along with his wife, Allyson, and son, Dolan.

“People tease me. They say my comics are in little

SANDRA: *So your first POWER RANGERS work — to collect it, you have to go out and buy some underwear?*

AL: Yeah, and people like to tease me. They say my comics are in little boys' and girls' underpants all over the country.

SANDRA: *Girls? I haven't seen any girls' POWER RANGERS underwear.*

AL: Well, it's probably for boys. but seriously —

SANDRA: *Kimberly and Trini underwear would really go over big.*

AL: What's interesting is — this is so big, and it's so different, they can actually market specifically for girls. Somebody told me there are Yellow and Pink Ranger dress-up dolls, which are very nice. And I've seen little girl clothes that are T-shirts with those two characters on them. In the past we've seen things with Wonder Woman, or — well, I can't think of many others. But that's how unprecedented it is, that they can cover such a wide area. Because girls are into it just as big as little boys, in such a large way.

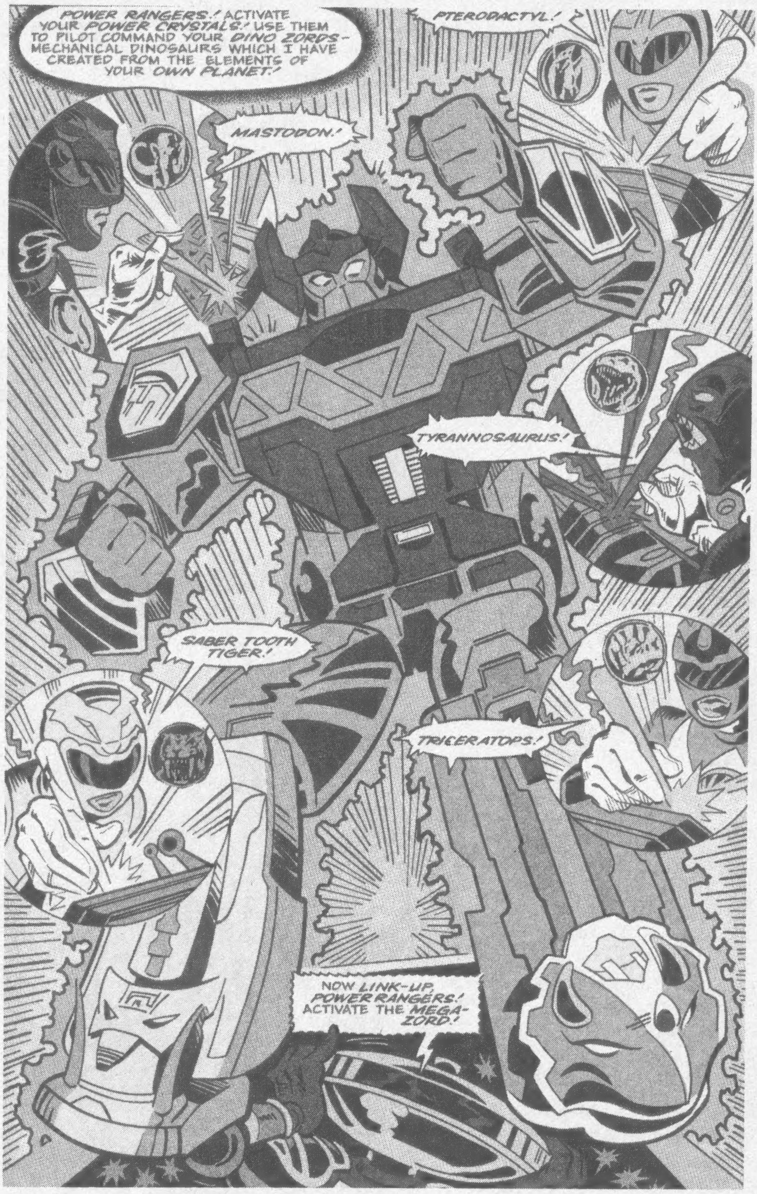
But yeah, it is in with the underwear. *(Laughter.)*

SANDRA: *Underwear that's fun to wear!*

AL: Yeah. But it's so weird, because so much of what I do is product-oriented, and it's so strange to go into my local Monroe, North Carolina, Wal-Mart — I live right down the road, and I'm seeing things I drew just a few months ago on shirts and in the activity books section and on apparel. It's just the strangest thing sometimes. Because I always thought my stuff would end up only in comic books.

SANDRA: *So, which of the shirt designs have you drawn? All of them, or some of them? How does that work?*

AL: Well, for POWER RANGERS, all I've done is the comic-book material and the activity books for the Golden Books people. Much of the apparel work I've done is for the BATMAN animated show, the animated series — which is a whole other thing. That just came out of doing a lot of style guide work for DC Comics. The manufacturers of the apparel can pick and choose the various artwork, the graphics that they want to put on the front of the shirts. So I may go in with my family, shopping, and all of a sudden I see a Robin that I drew on the shirt with Batman, and maybe villains. Or maybe a Joker I drew, and he's superimposed on somebody else's drawing of Batman. A lot of it is cut-and-paste. I did a great deal of work for the animated-movie style guide, MASK OF THE PHANTASM. So it's amazing to see stuff like that, or turn on QVC and there's **Mark Hamill** with my designs parading around with him, him and **Kevin Conroy.** It's a real kick. You go into the store and it's all over the place. It's an amazing thing!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Another glimpse into the first-ever MMPR mini-comic — by Harris, Bigley & Stiles. A repro of the cover can be found in CI #135 — back issues, folks!

SANDRA: *That must be great! With the MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS, what is your involvement with the current comic book that's going to be coming out this fall?*

AL: As I said earlier, I was the original penciller for the series as it was announced to begin in June. Apparently, there was some kind of red tape with Saban. I just think Saban was not prepared for the popularity. In other words, having so many groups, so many manufacturers that wanted to jump on the bandwagon was just overwhelming. And what it was, was that Hamilton had to show, in a much more detailed way, what the comic book would look like, and had to kind of retrench themselves. Also, to facilitate Saban's approval process they knew they were going to have to have more than one artist. Because you can't

boys' and girls' underpants all over the country."

have just one artist who has a monthly deadline, waiting for approvals from the people that own the license, when of course that's going to mess up the people down the line. Because if I make it late, of course then the inker is late, and the letterer, and so forth. So they said, let's get in maybe two or three artists and have them as the rotating crew, so one can be working on subsequent issues while we're waiting for approval on the preceding one, and so forth. And that was their idea behind having rotating artists. So right now I am pencilling what will be issue #3, that will come out, I suppose, in January, if this will be a monthly schedule for the book. Also inking it, which is kind of fun, because I've done a lot of inking for non-comics projects I've done in the past. This will be kind of a chance to show my talents, because of course pencillers are notorious for seeing the inked work and not being completely satisfied.

SANDRA: *Right. No one to blame!*

AL: That's the plan. Gladstone/Hamilton is blazing full-guns into the POWER RANGERS arena with a comic book that will begin in November, if I understand it correctly, and I may be rotating with two other artists, or one other artist. I know **Gray Morrow** is involved in some capacity, and possibly **Joe Staton.** I think **Jack C. Harris** is still aboard as a writer; also with the fellow who works for you guys.

SANDRA: *Don Markstein?*

AL: That's him, **Don Markstein.** So as it stands right now, that's how it works. This isn't something that is particular to the comic book. It also occurs with the other licensed material such as the Golden Books. That has to be approved. It takes time for them to get to it, because like I said there are so many companies that are putting out these products.

SANDRA: *Now, tell me a little bit about the interaction between yourself and Saban. I've heard horror stories about other companies, such as Paramount and their STAR TREK licensing, where they can go in and change minute details to entire storylines. How is it going for you?*

AL: Well, I don't deal directly with Saban. My editor does, be it the comic book or the special projects or the activity books. In the past, the only thing that Saban has been very concerned about is the appearance of, for example, the helmets on the Power Rangers, or maybe the kids look a little bit too old, because they have to hit that specific age target. That's really it. Now, I don't know, because this comic book I'm doing now, I'm waiting for approval, and of course there's some changes. It could come back where they've decided to eliminate several pages, and of course that would throw the whole story off kilter. So it's too early to say. But it's been very minor. I've dealt with other people that were harder to deal with in that capacity before. I, personally, have no harsh words. Again, I think they were just unprepared for the onslaught — the *tidal wave* of this activity because of the popularity of Power Rangers.

SANDRA: *Do the actors and actresses who appear on the show have any say in their likenesses? Do they get, like the kid who plays Jason, to say "That doesn't look like me" or "Make me look more manly" or whatever?*

AL: I don't think so. I don't know how that works, but I really don't think that happens in this case. Again, I'm kind of pushed back from that scene because I'm the third person down the totem pole, so to speak, who deals with the material. But I really don't think they have any say. That could be a contractual thing; that just could be a symbol of star status, like **Michael Keaton** with the various Kenner Batman figures. He had to approve those, if I remember, and get a piece of the pie — for his chin, I guess. *(Laughter.)* They sure weren't his muscles! Of course, now, it's interesting because we have the three new Rangers, and I've just recently gotten —

SANDRA: (Gasp!)

AL: — photos of them —

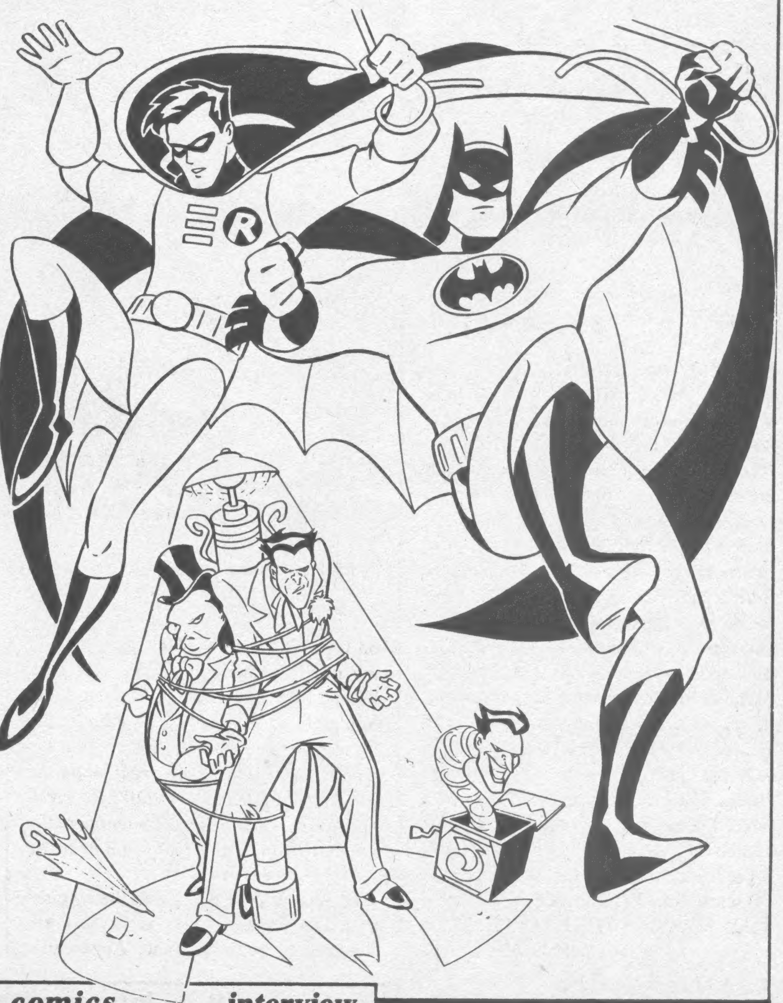
SANDRA: *Three new Rangers! Let's talk about that!*

AL: Three new actors, I should say, playing the Yellow, Black and Red Rangers.

SANDRA: *This is hot breaking news! Now, tell me — which of the old Rangers are leaving?*

AL: Apparently, Jason, Zack and Trini

T-shirt illustration by Al. Inks: Nate Butler.



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"Drawing Rita, I thought of how Kirby did THOR."

are leaving. As I understand it — and this could be totally false —

SANDRA: *Or changed by the time this goes to press.*

AL: Exactly. Those three actors simply asked for more money, because they saw the big returns on this project. And in typical Hollywood tradition, they said, like **William Dozier** to **Adam West**, there've been thirteen Tarzans, so don't get any ideas, Batman. *(Laughter.)*

SANDRA: *Right.*

AL: I think they said that to these kids. "You can be replaced," in other words. And that's what they did. I kind of hate it, because I love drawing Trini, and I like drawing Zack. Jason, I could live without. He's neither here nor there.

SANDRA: *He's a pretty neutral kid, appearance-wise.*

AL: Right. When drawing him, I always thought of young **Elvis,** because he kind of has that —

SANDRA: (Laughter.)

AL: — you know, he's got the eyebrows and he's got the big lip, and doesn't say a lot.

SANDRA: *Elvis in the Red Ranger jumpsuit.*

AL: If **Elvis** were alive today, he'd be a Ranger. He'd be like Zordon or something. But seriously, the new kids — the new kids on the block, so to speak — are very interesting in the fact that the new fellow that replaces Jason looks something like **Jason Priest.** It's a very 90210 look. He's got the big hair on top and the dimples and the hollow cheeks and everything.

SANDRA: *And his character name is —*

AL: I *think* it's Rocky. I may be wrong. And I think the fellow who is the Black Ranger is Adam, and new Yellow Ranger is Aisha. Now, it's good that they're not trying to replace the actual characters of Jason and Trini, etc. I guess they're saying they graduated or they moved on. Maybe their families moved.

SANDRA: *Is it that their families moved?*

AL: I don't know. That was just a joke. Insert *(Laughter)* there.

SANDRA: *Insert* (Laughter.) *And Don, don't list this, but my personal opinion is, they lost their virginity, so they had to leave. But that's not going to be in the interview —* (ahem!) *right, Don?*

DON MARKSTEIN (transcriber — not present): Wrong.

AL: You may be surprised!

SANDRA: (Laughter.) *It's such a good line! I've said that to a couple of people, and they've said, "You've got to run that!" But anyway —*

AL: I don't know what happens. But wouldn't that be a nice thing? Because in real life, that's the big trauma of young adult/childhood, moving away from your friends in school. But who knows?

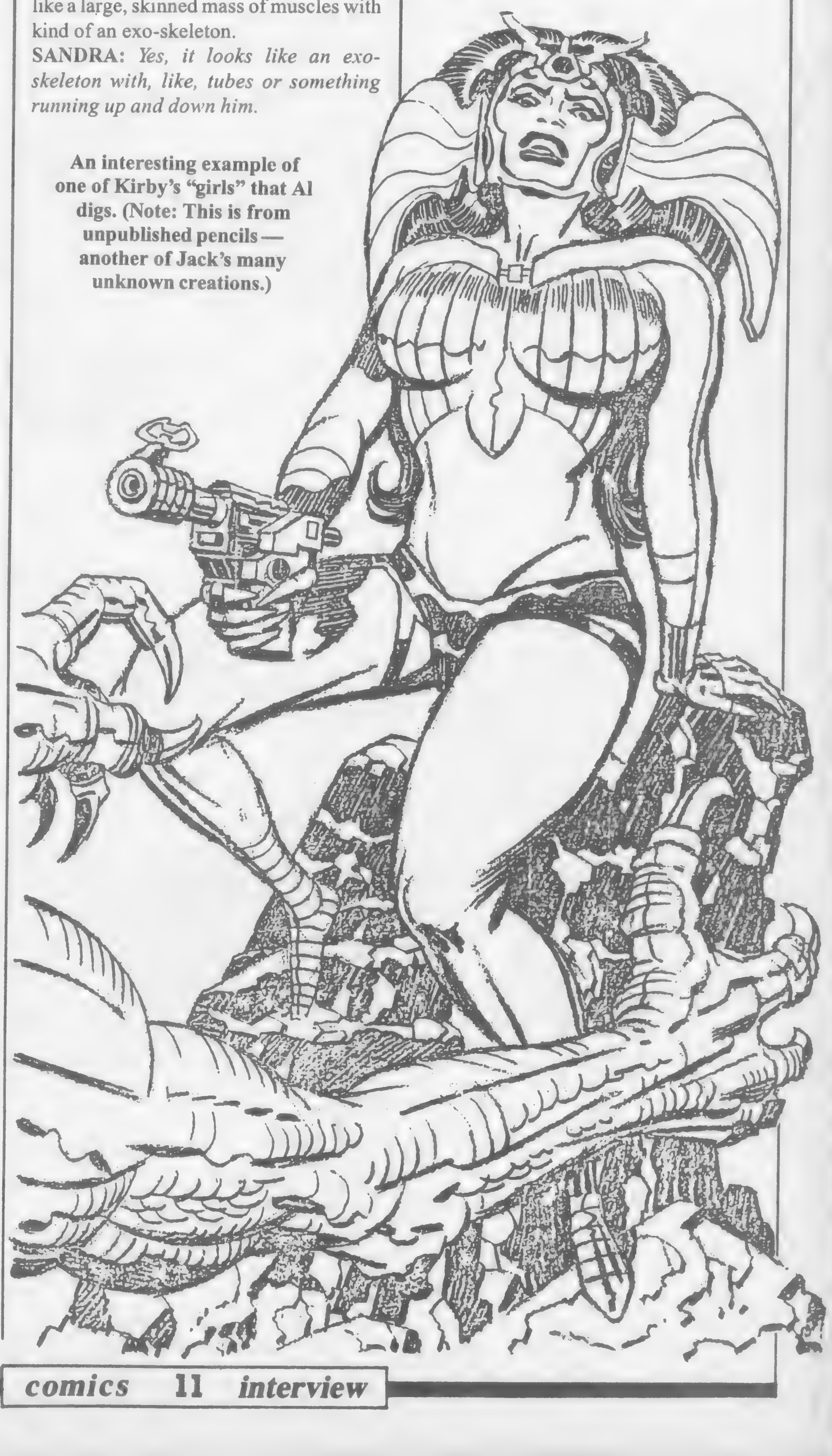
And of course, this season, we have all new weapons and Zords, and Rita's gone, and we have Lord Zedd. And he's hard to draw, because he's an armored character. He's not like Doctor Doom; he's more like a large, skinned mass of muscles with kind of an exo-skeleton.

SANDRA: *Yes, it looks like an exo-skeleton with, like, tubes or something running up and down him.*

AL: And he has a strange helmet. I loved drawing Rita, because of the facial expressions. She was very fluid.

SANDRA: *And she wore a lot of make-up.*

AL: When drawing her I thought of the way **Jack Kirby** handled many of the female characters in THOR. They were bigger than life, with the large headdresses and various flowing accoutre-



An interesting example of one of Kirby's "girls" that Al digs. (Note: This is from unpublished pencils — another of Jack's many unknown creations.)

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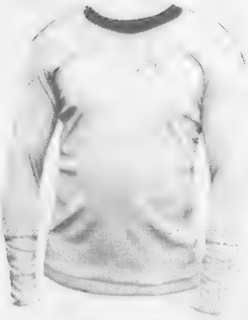

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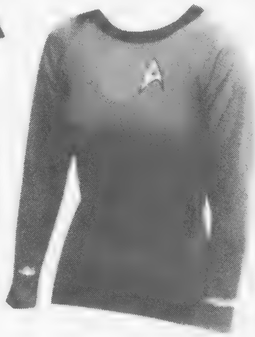

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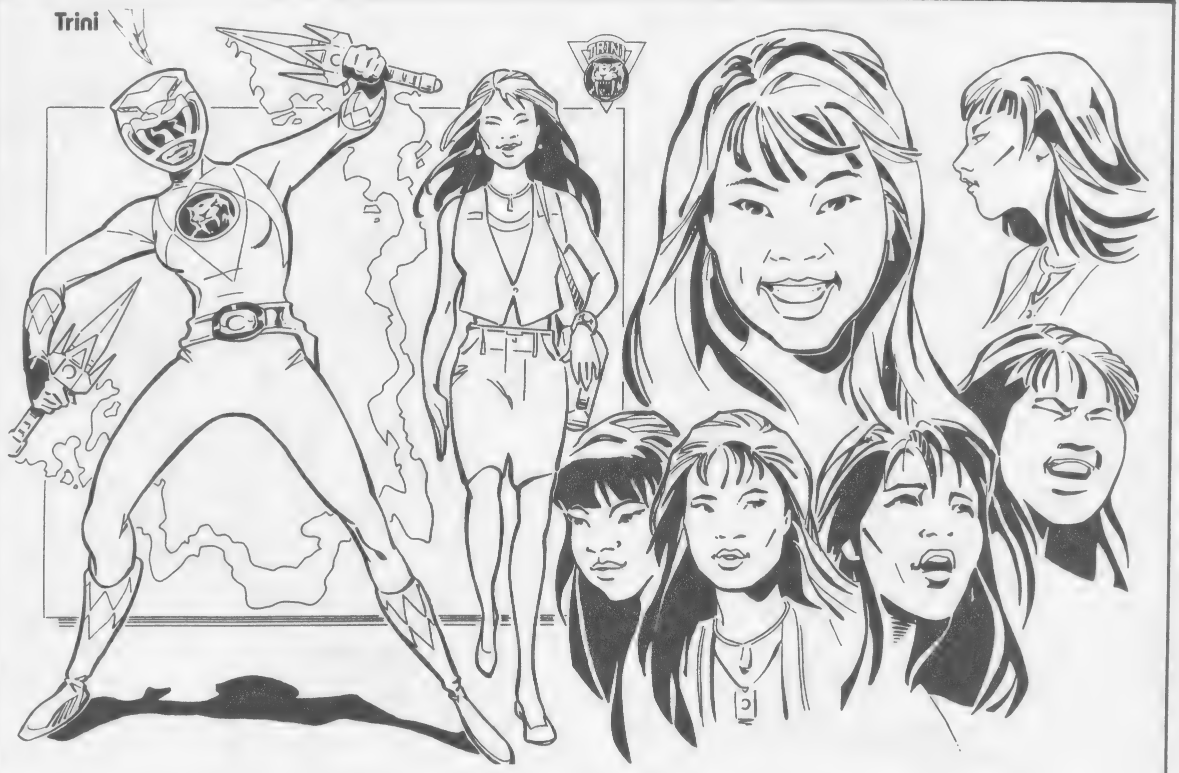
“I like expressions and gestures, various activity.”



Here and next three pages: Al’s model sheets for the Power Rangers.

ments, and what-have-you. Plus, I could have so much fun with her face. And now we’re dealing with characters that are all behind helmets, including the main villain. Although there’s a lot of fun in the large monsters, because usually the writer leaves it to your imagination to come up with visually interesting monsters that these characters fight. That’s a lot of fun. We’ve just got new things all around.

SANDRA: *Now, the new Zords are sort of an amalgam of the original Zords and new Zords? I’ve watched the new shows, and it doesn’t make a whole lot of sense. When you draw them, do you just draw them in their new structures?*

AL: So far, in the comic, the actual Zords haven’t played too big a role. A lot of it is Power Ranger action individually, and then of course as the Mega-Zord, which is also new this season.

SANDRA: *Right. Mega-Thunder-Zord, or whatever they’re calling him.*

AL: Now, all I know is the reference they’ve given me. It looks like a lot of the Zords are based on the Sphinx. They look like resting animals, as opposed to before, where you had something that looked like a sabre-tooth tiger, that can move in similar ways to the animal, these look more like actual vehicles *shaped* like an animal.

SANDRA: *Except for the Dragon.*

AL: Right. That’s very strange. It looks kind of like a kite of some kind. *(Laughter.)*

SANDRA: *Yeah. It’s very strange.*

AL: But it’s a lot of fun. It’s very intricate. And that’s another unusual thing. I’ve never been one to enjoy doing the machinery. I’ve always been an artist who likes the people, the physical expressions and gestures and body language and clothing, and various activity. Of course, I’ve known artists who *lived* for that. They lived to do anything that involved an Iron Man type character, or any type of machinery. But again, it doesn’t play that big a part. It’s still action-oriented and it moves very quickly. And there’s room to include lots of the hero element in it.

SANDRA: *How accurate are you trying to be with the actual martial arts techniques? I know that on the show, they try to be fairly accurate. And my kids imitate them — unstoppably! Did you get yourself some books, or attend a couple of Tai-Kwan-Do classes? What did you do?*

AL: No, I’ve already got in my morgue file a great deal on the various martial arts. And somewhere, I found an illustrated instruction-type book that has many of the moves illustrated. But in the comics, again, it moves so fast. Basically, the Rangers, when going up against a monster, will use their weapons or what-have-you. There’s very little hand-to-hand combat. But that’s right now. Who knows what’s coming?

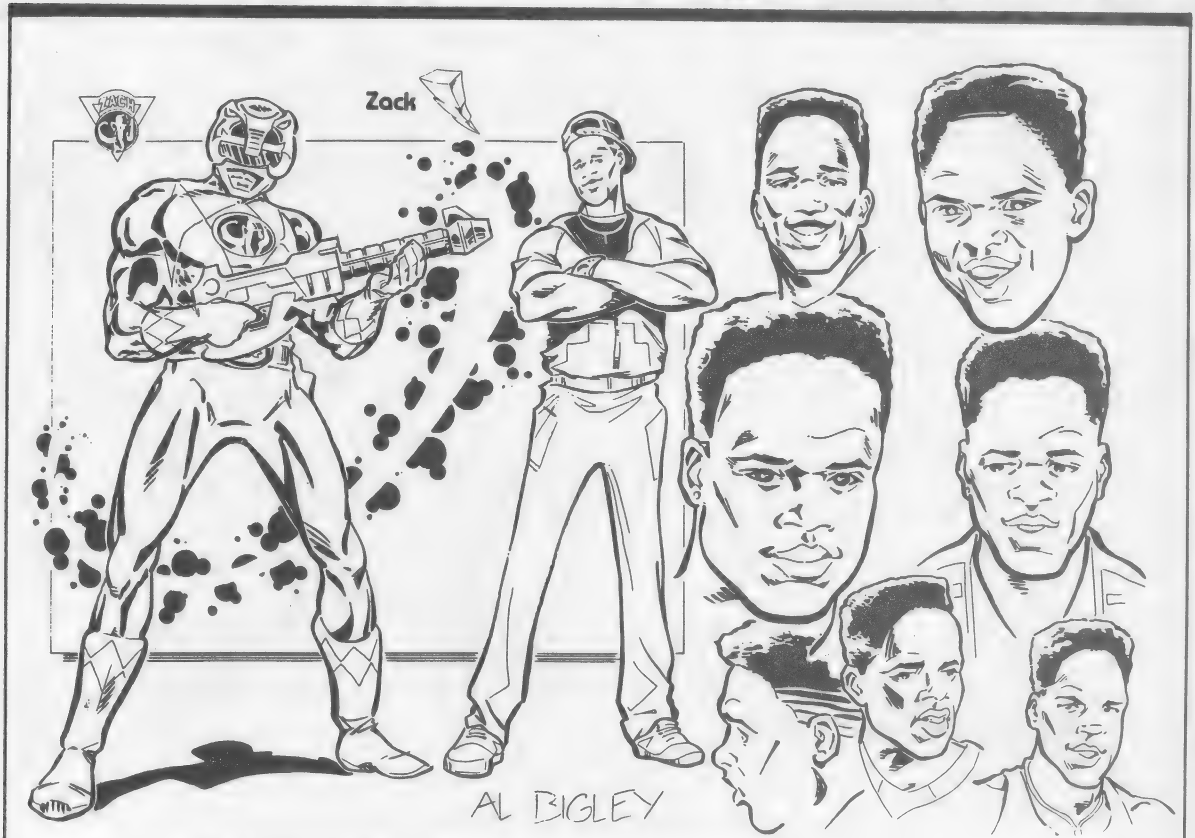
SANDRA: *But what about the Putties? You’ve got to fight the Putties! It’s tradition!*

AL: I haven’t dealt with them, except in the underwear comic. *(Laughter.)*

SANDRA: *I’m going to rush out and buy me a set of that underwear!*

AL: Also, in the activity books, there are many instances where you have to draw them in fighting stances. And I also try to mimic that peculiar way they stand, and those gestures they make. There’s a lot of hand gestures. And that may sound obscene *(Laughter)*, but there’s a lot of hand gestures in the fact that producers know when you can’t see expressions on the faces, you’ve got to do it all with body language and pantomime and whatnot. So I try to have them where Jason is spouting a command, of course he has his fist up in that vertical way that he does, and the various Rangers are all ready to spring

“We feature parents of the Rangers, and you see the



into action. And that's something that **Jack C. Harris** specified, too, that they don't stand around. Even in dramatic posing, they're always ready for action. That's why they're there. So I guess you'll never see them sitting around, having a cup of coffee or something.

SANDRA: *Not in costume.*

AL: No.

SANDRA: *Well, they're going to go to Ernie's Juice Bar and have a guava-melon punch.*

AL: I was talking with my editor at Golden Books. I don't remember a juice bar in my high school; I'm sorry.

SANDRA: *Oh, it's not in the high school! It's the Youth Center.*

AL: It's not? Oh, okay!

SANDRA: *It's separate from the school.*

AL: Well, that shows you how much I know.

SANDRA: *See, I watch the show too much.* (Laughter.) *It's a separate building. That's why you can trash it on a regular basis. And that's why they can have parties there and stuff, because it's a separate building — because Ernie was going to go out of business and all that.*

AL: Okay. See, I thought they were having too much fun in that high school. Now I'm not worried anymore.

SANDRA: *No, no, no. That principal is not going to let them have that much fun. What about Bulk and Skull? Do they get to come into the comic books?*

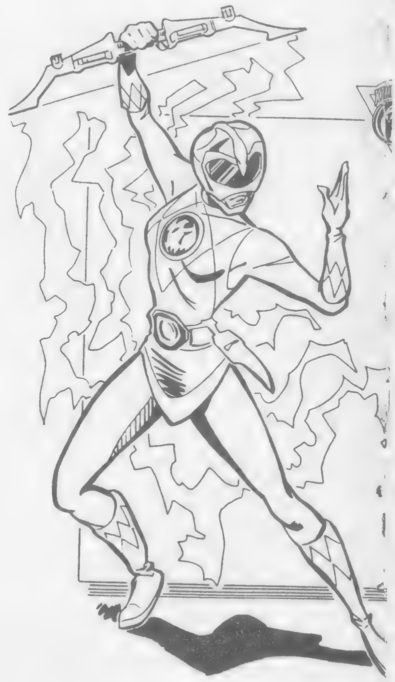
AL: Yes, they do. And like in the show, they provide a lot of comic relief. I don't know what you expect to hear. I could tell you, you know, we do an issue where we get into Bulk's feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy — but no, we don't do anything like that. The relationship is not “fully explored” in these issues.

SANDRA: *But they do appear? I would think they'd be fun to draw. They remind me of Laurel and Hardy — the two physical opposites, and they wear a lot of weird clothes, and — what is that helmet Bulk wears, with his pony tail sticking out the back? It's kind of like a leather skull cap or something.*

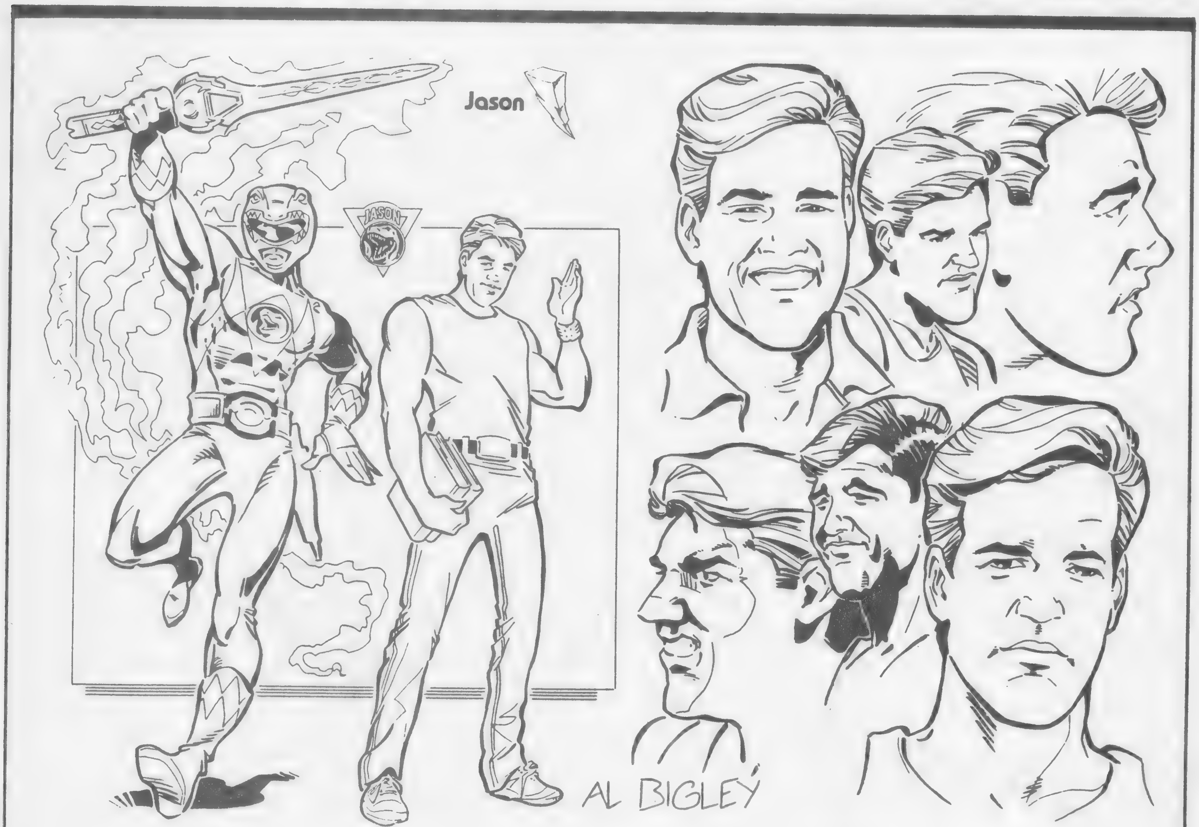
AL: They *are* fun to draw, because of course they are opposites, plus they have these great facial expressions. I like Skull a great deal because he's just all expression.

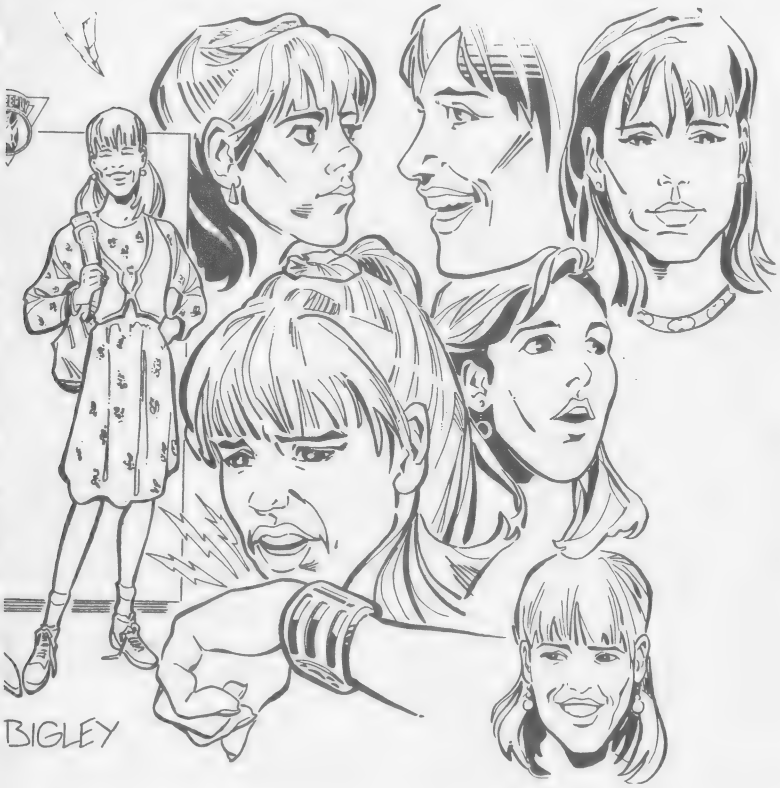
SANDRA: *He's Jim Carrey Junior.*

AL: Right! And of course, we have issues that may feature the various parents of the Rangers, and you get to see the principal and the teachers. And it's much like the show. There's a great deal of interaction at the high school, and also on the super-



principal and teachers. It's much like the show."





hero level. And of course, the various henchmen on the Moon base appear. Finster, who's creating all kinds of monsters, and you've got Baboo and Squatt and — Goldar may appear later, but they're all there.

SANDRA: *Hey, sounds good! We've touched briefly on the Golden Books. Now, you've worked with Golden on some other projects, but tell me in some detail about how they approached you to do the Morphin-to-Math and Morphin-to-Reading workbooks, and what your role was in creating them.*

AL: Again, I simply sent them samples. I'd done work for them before, for a lot of DC-oriented projects. And they were looking for people that were familiar with the Power Rangers. And I just happened to step in and touch bases with them and say, "What have you got to give me?" And they said, "Oh, now that you've called, and you've done Power Rangers, we've got these books that we're thinking of doing. There was another company called Honey Bear, that has kind of flooded the market with other activity books before Golden could get in on it. And they pretty much just used the style guide material in all their books. So I think what happened was Golden simply could not put out a coloring book or a

“The work is fun. And it’s great, knowing some

paint book. It had to be a specific type of book. So of course, they went to the learning aspect of this type of material. So everything, of course, is basic math or reading lessons or activities.

SANDRA: *And did you think up those activities yourself? Or was that something someone gave you — this is what I’d like, a maze with numbers, or something?*

AL: Exactly. A lot of it is pre-planned by writers. Just like in comics, they hire people to create this work. A lot of layout was left to me. A great deal of basic drawing was accomplished by me. And I got to ink this work. In comics, we get used to how fragmented it is, and to the outside world it is very unusual that the same person that draws it does not ink it or does not letter it or does not write it. That’s very unusual to other artistic disciplines, so to speak. But that’s pretty much it. I provided them with the pencils, and they had to be approved by Golden and by Saban. And just inked it and went from there. It’s different, of course, because you have to be a little bit more simplified, but I still want to draw accurately. I know growing up there were several TV-related comic books and material that I saw, and I was disappointed when the artist did not get a likeness correct, or didn’t try to get all the little details. I don’t want kids looking at this work and thinking, “This guy doesn’t know about Jason’s belt,” or something.

SANDRA: *Do you feel pleased that you had an opportunity to work on something that’s so education-oriented?*

AL: Oh, sure! It’s very rewarding. The work is a great deal of fun. It pays very well. And you get the added bonus of seeing it everywhere. It’s out everywhere right now. And these kind of books played a large part, along with comic books, in my youth, where I would get Batman coloring books, or whatever, or tracing books, or paint-by-number books, and they really do play a part in your youthful artistic experience, so to speak. And it’s really great, knowing some young person is getting something out of these.

SANDRA: *Right! And just in time for Christmas!*

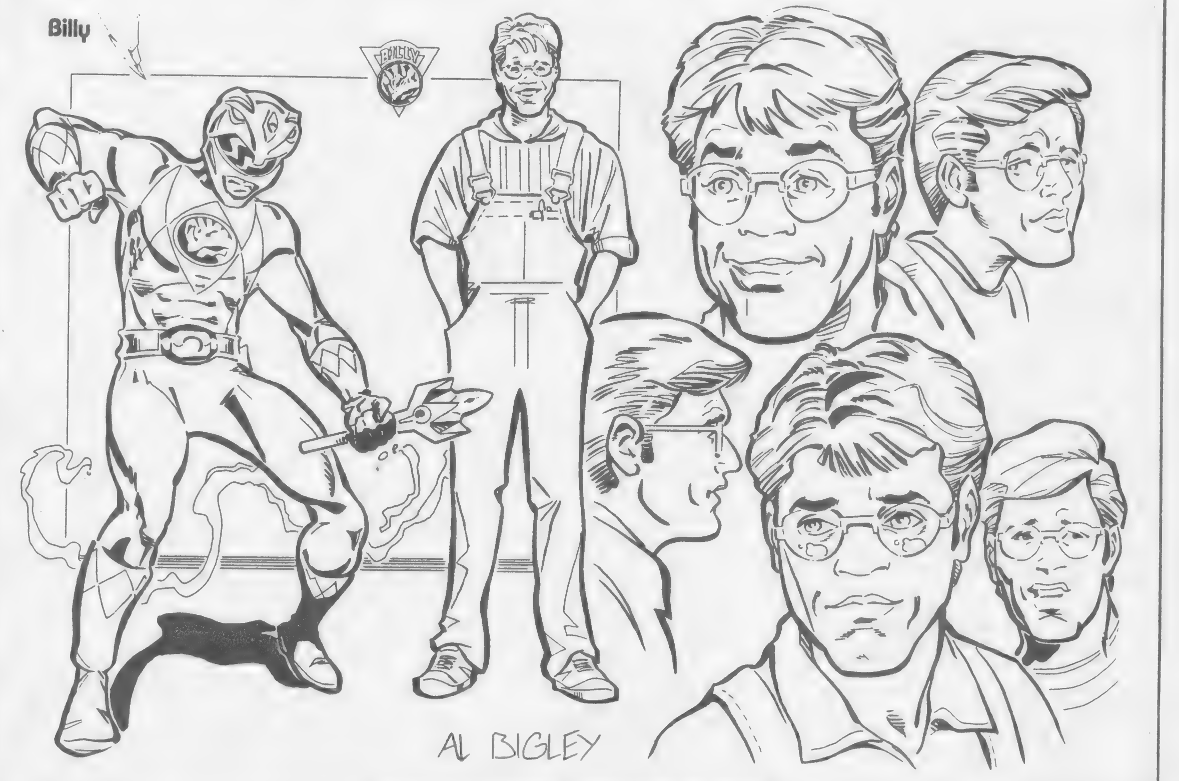
AL: Exactly!

SANDRA: *Now, one thing that has bothered me about coloring books and activity books is that they don’t list who did the work. Has that changed?*

AL: Not really. There is some kind of restriction toward that. And I’m not sure about it. I saw a book recently by another storybook-type publisher, a smaller publisher, that boasted artwork by **Tony Tallarico** — who is *infamous* in comics. He did a great deal of material, I guess, as far up as the ’60s. And he got full credit, and the writers — and at other times you’ll see storybooks where there are no credits. I have spoken to Golden about it and I get the impression if I was really bullheaded about it I’d get credits. It never bothered me, but I’m getting to the point in my career where it really does mean something. I mean, the money, the big paycheck stops being enough. I’m thinking, “Boy, my name really should be on these things because I’m putting my heart into them.” You say to the average guy, “I did a coloring book,” and, like, “Oh, big deal, why do you want your name on that?” But when you put 100% into everything, you want to be known for it and you want to take pride in it.

SANDRA: *Maybe if you tell them collectors will buy it up like hotcakes —*

AL: There you go! I notice a lot of the editorial people at Saban are getting bylines in a lot of these things. Other types of work, like the Batman work I’ve done for them through DC, various things have credits; various things don’t. Some book-and-records have full credits, for example, mark-and-see books, which are, like, hidden picture books, don’t carry credits. So I don’t know if there’s a rule book somewhere that says sometimes you can and sometimes you can’t. I’m not clear on that.



young person is getting something out of it."

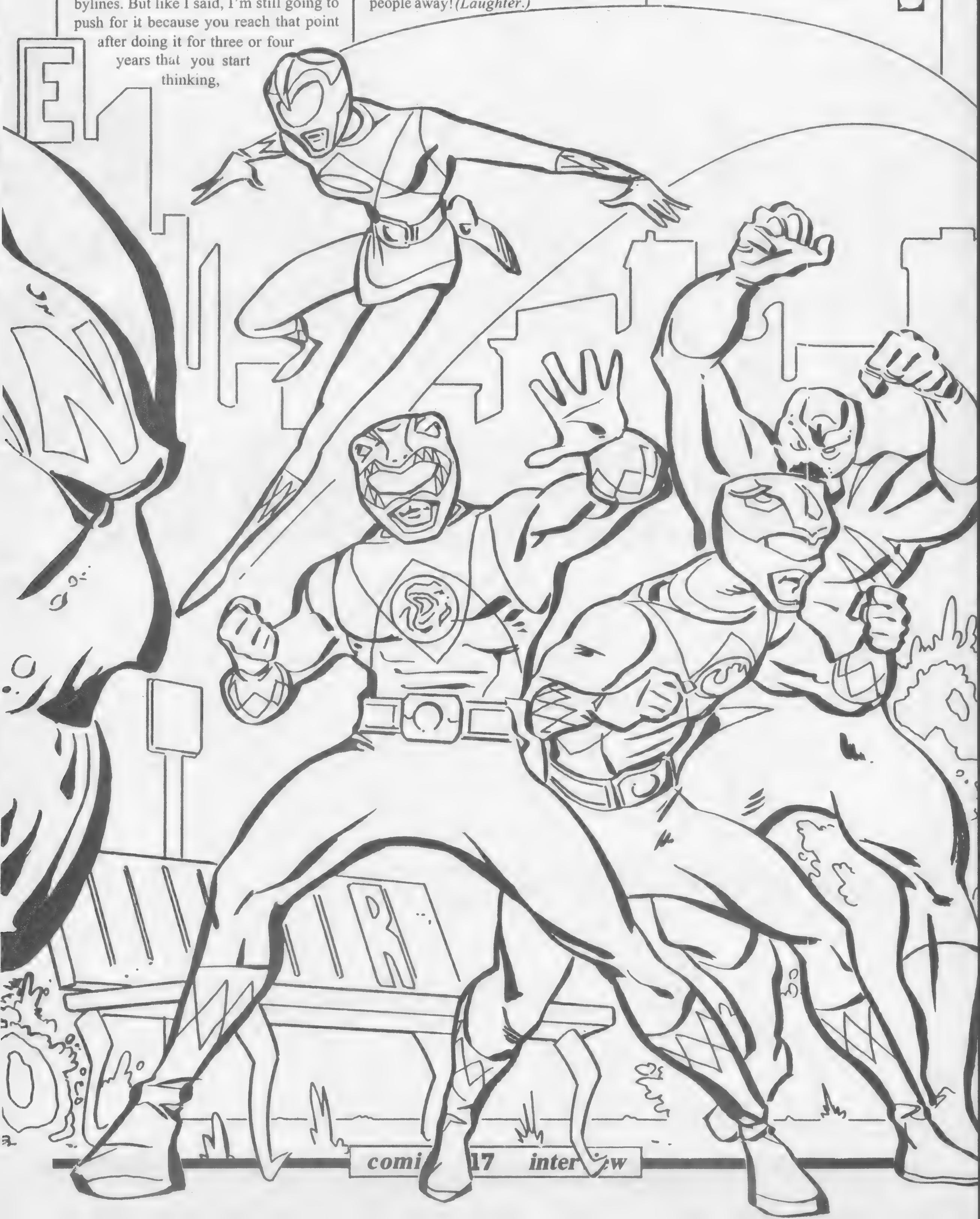
SANDRA: *Probably, they think nobody cares.*

AL: Could be. It could just be tradition, like for years comics didn't carry proper bylines. But like I said, I'm still going to push for it because you reach that point after doing it for three or four years that you start thinking, I really should get credit. Nothing wrong with that. It won't hurt sales, I don't think.

Maybe they think it would! My name inside the front cover, that might send people away! *(Laughter.)*

SANDRA: *Oh, my God! It's drawn by that Al Bigley fellow!*

AL: Yeah! *NEXT ISSUE: Part Two of this interview. Be here!*



“Apparently, the owners of the property had never dealt

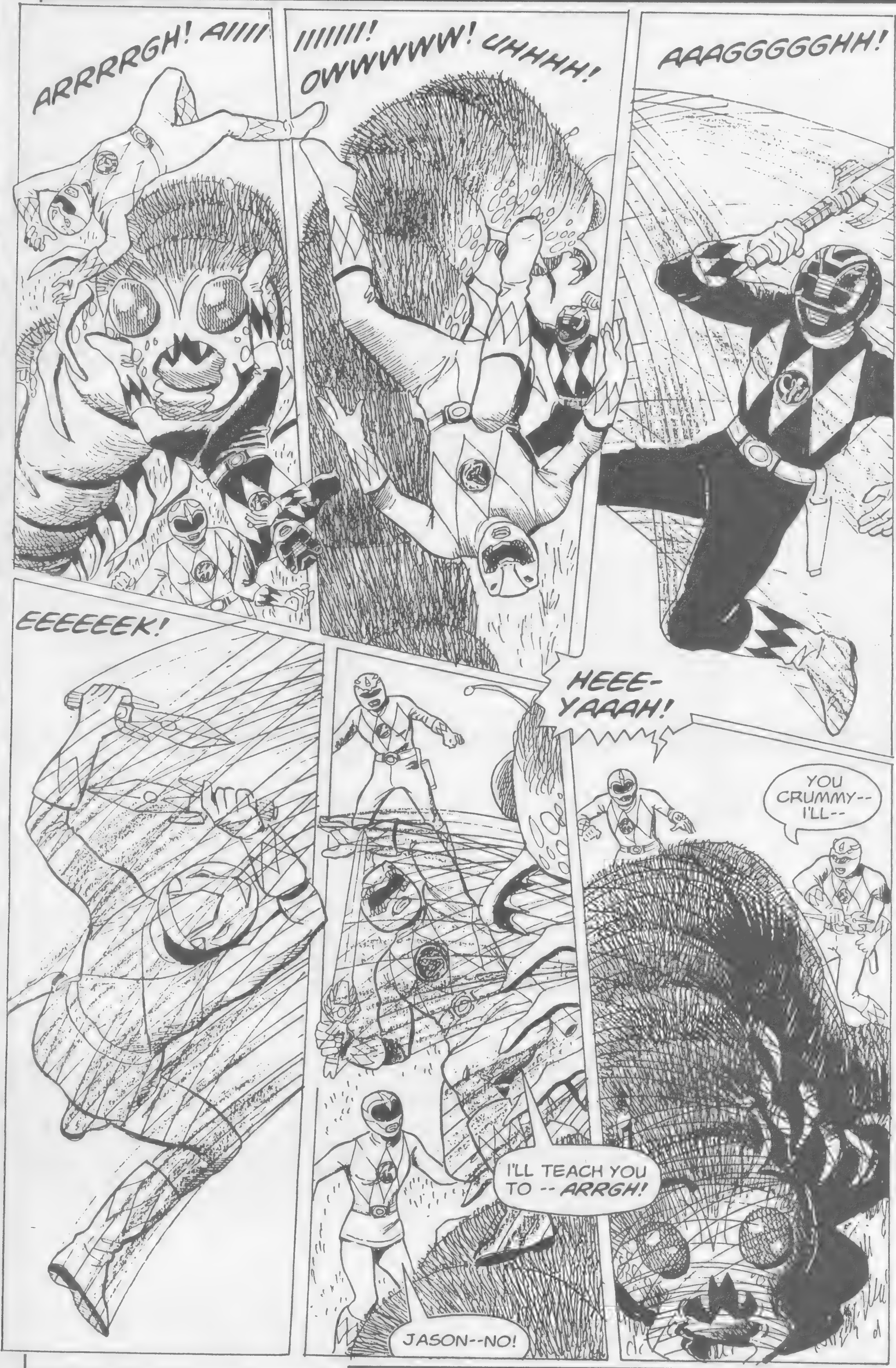
MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS

GRAY MORROW

To the discerning follower of the comics medium, Gray Morrow — whose art lends class to the first issue of Hamilton Comics' MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS — needs no introduction. Therefore, without further ado . . .

DON MARKSTEIN: *How did you happen to get on to the POWER RANGERS?*
GRAY MORROW: I worked on other features for the Gladstone people.
DON: *Oh, really? Such as?*
GRAY: They had a series of black-and-white horror magazines a couple of years back. They called me in to do those. I guess they remembered that stuff when the POWER RANGERS came up.
DON: *What did you do for the black-and-white horror books?*
GRAY: Well, they were typical, like the old SHOCK THEATRE. They had a host or hostess narrating the story, and they were all done with those twist endings.
DON: *The EC-style stuff?*
GRAY: Right.
DON: *Now, you go back quite a ways. Do you go back quite as far as EC? I first noticed your name in the '60s, with the Warren magazines.*
GRAY: I never had the pleasure of working for EC, but I worked for just about everybody else over the last 40 years.
DON: *Seems like I remember your stuff in 1950s issues of GALAXY, the science-fiction magazine.*
GRAY: Yeah, I used to do a lot of stuff for them.
DON: *It seems to me a little spot illustration in there, where the emphasis is on prose stories, would pay practically nothing compared to comic-book work, where the art is so important. Was that sort of thing a fairly decent gig?*
GRAY: The payment was relatively small, but I'd always been a fan of the material. Certainly, I couldn't depend upon that as my base income. It was just fun stuff to do.
DON: *So you were doing comics then, also?*
GRAY: Oh, I was doing comics; I was doing book illustrations, magazine illustrations, all kinds of stuff.
DON: *Had you been contacted to do the first POWER RANGERS issue from the original solicitation?*
GRAY: Yeah, yeah. As far as I know.
DON: *I was submitting plots at that time. I wound up writing the first issue and the second, and several others, but it was a long time before I knew anything about acceptance of the plots.*
GRAY: Apparently, the Saban people, owners of the property, had never dealt with a comic publisher before. They just had no idea what they were doing or which way to head.
DON: *I also gather the tremendous success took them by surprise, too.*
GRAY: Apparently so. Nobody figured it would be as hot as it is.
DON: *They have a lot of licensing material to deal with! What are some of the problems you find in dealing with licensed material, in particular?*
GRAY: The main problem is getting the likenesses of the main characters and their outfits and equipment and so forth as accurate as possible. They're very fussy about that.
DON: *And the Power Rangers have so much hardware!*
GRAY: Yeah, exactly!
DON: *Is this the first licensed material you've done?*
GRAY: I did a ROCKETEER story and a lot of merchandise material — a FLASH GORDON watch, stuff of that nature.
DON: *Something just flashed through*

with comics. They had no idea which way to head."


ARRRRGH! AIIII
IIIIIII! OWWWWW! UHHHH!
AAAGGGGGGHH!
EEEEEEEK!
HEEE-YAAAH!
YOU CRUMMY-- I'LL--
I'LL TEACH YOU TO -- ARRGH!
JASON--NO!

Here's one of Gray Morrow's action scenes from MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS #1. The scintillating dialog is by COMICS INTERVIEW's own Don Markstein (who claims other pages contain more reading matter). (By the way — to give you an idea of the ratio of words in the script the artist sees, to words that wind up on the page for the reader to see, the original script for this page contained 191 words.)

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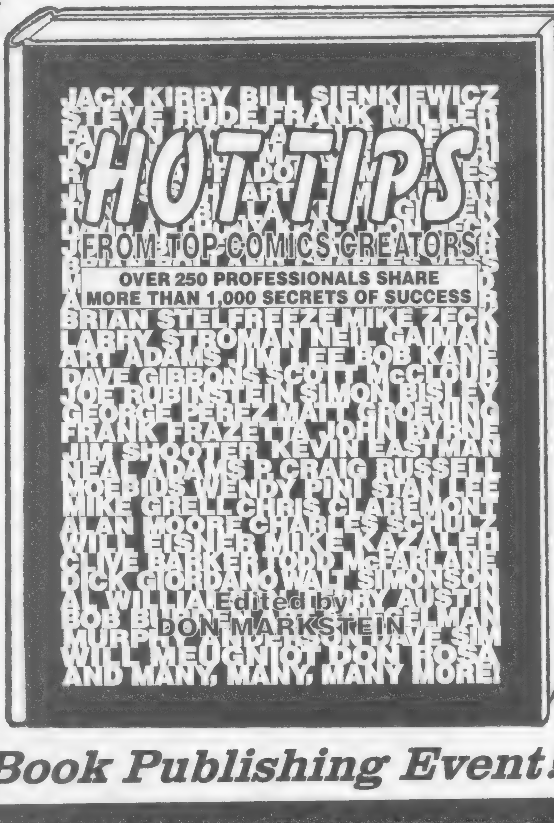
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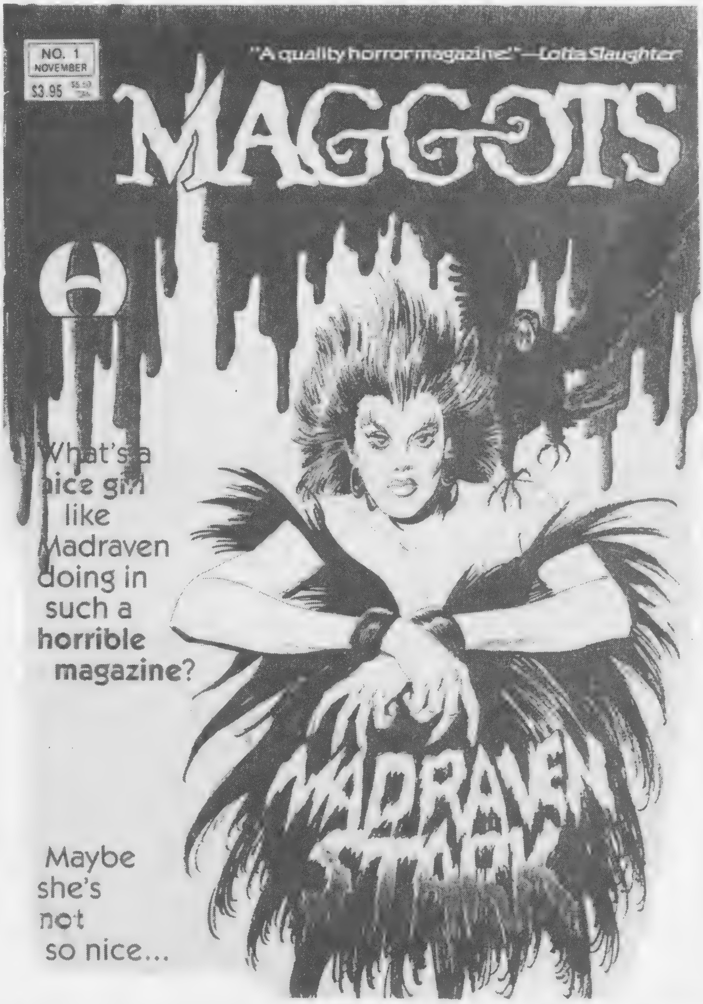
"I did a feature recently for Penthouse Comics."

Most of the creative personnel on POWER RANGERS worked earlier on Hamilton's short-lived horror line. Here's the cover of MAGGOTS #1 — by Gray Morrow.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MAGGOTS
What's a nice girl like Madraven doing in such a horrible magazine?
MADRAVEN STORY
Maybe she's not so nice...

my head — the revival of the BUCK ROGERS comic strip?

GRAY: Well, I worked on it for about two years.

DON: *I had seen a couple of samples of it. I never really saw any large runs of the strip, but it just flashed through my head and what I saw, I remember looking like your work.*

You know, when I mention POWER RANGERS and people say "Who's the artist?" and I say "Gray Morrow," they tend to gasp. It seems like you're kind of a high-class guy to be working on a "cheap little licensed thing" like this. And yet — it's not that cheap.

GRAY: No, it's probably one of the most successful series ever to come down the pike.

DON: *When I went to the San Diego Comic Con, I was telling people that on the way to the airport I saw POWER RANGERS plush toys and POWER RANGERS balloons and POWER RANGERS jellybean dispensers, and I cashed a POWER RANGERS check.*

Are you doing anything on POWER RANGERS besides the first issue?

GRAY: They just called me last week. They wanted to know if I'd like to do another one. I said, "Certainly!"

DON: *Great! Have they sent you the script yet?*

GRAY: No. Maybe it'll be one of yours.

DON: *Maybe so. I've had four so far. Jack Harris has done some others.*

GRAY: Do you know Jack?

DON: *I don't know him personally, but I know his work. As far as I know, he's the only other writer who's done this stuff. He did #3 and a back-up story in #5.*

How about some of your work for Marvel and DC? That's what makes somebody famous in comics these days. *When did you first work for Marvel?*

GRAY: Oh, that's so far back, I don't even remember. Back in the '50s, I guess. They were known as Timely Publications at that time. That's when the Comics Code Authority first came in, and so many of the publishers were dropping their lines of comics and getting out of the business altogether. They didn't want to deal with that.

DON: *Bad time to be coming in?*

GRAY: Yeah, it was rough. But anyway, that was my first experience with Marvel — doing mystery stories in the 1950s.

DON: *Of course, that was before Marvel became what we now think of as Marvel.*

GRAY: Right. Right. But over the years I've worked for them off and on. I still work for them off and on.

DON: *Somebody mentioned that you did some X-MEN recently. I don't follow the X-MEN, personally.*

GRAY: Yeah, these were through Simon & Schuster — they were little picture books for a junior audience.

DON: *Kind of like the Little Golden Books, along those lines?*

GRAY: Right, right. I did a couple of those.

DON: *Now, that would not be directly for Marvel. Have you worked for Marvel recently?*

GRAY: Yeah, I did a SPIDER-MAN thing for their Christmas issue, during the holidays. I did a feature recently for Penthouse Comics.

DON: *Oh, Penthouse Comics? Now, you don't see those in comic-book stores very much. The comic-book market is a little bit vaster than most people realize. So, what are you doing for them?*

GRAY: A slick-packaged deal for PENTHOUSE, for a companion magazine with all comics-related material.

DON: *Wicked Wanda and that kind of stuff?*

GRAY: That kind of stuff. Adult material, in other words.

DON: *As far as I know, they don't even solicit that stuff through comic-book distributors.*

GRAY: Well, I know they're on newsstands, regular newsstands — also in comics stores.

DON: *How about other recent work? Is that basically what you're doing these days?*

GRAY: That's *basically* what I'm doing now. And the POWER RANGERS, and oddball things.

DON: *How about your work for DC over the years? I know you've done a fair amount of that, too.*

GRAY: Yeah, with them as with Marvel

"I watched a few episodes but don't see it regularly."

— off and on over the years. I've been working on something called SCARLETT.

DON: *SCARLETT?*

GRAY: Yeah, a female vampire.

DON: *Oh, for the Vertigo line?*

GRAY: No, this is for the regular line.

DON: *Oh, really? They're branching back into that kind of stuff in the regular comics?*

GRAY: They keep trying!

DON: *Now, getting back to POWER RANGERS — I watch the show every day. Do you keep up with it?*

GRAY: No, my schedule is so full. I watched a few episodes, just to see what people and things look like, for reference, but I don't see it regularly.

DON: *What kind of reference material do they give you?*

GRAY: Not enough!

DON: *Really! What they gave me was very sketchy.*

GRAY: Very sketchy!

DON: *I saw some of the model sheets you did of the characters for the first issue. Are you aware that they've replaced three of the Rangers?*

GRAY: I read something about that, yeah. Something about wanting more money now that it's going to be a feature film, so they said "Goodbye."

DON: *Makes* me *a little hesitant to ask for more money.* (Laughter.) *How about you?*

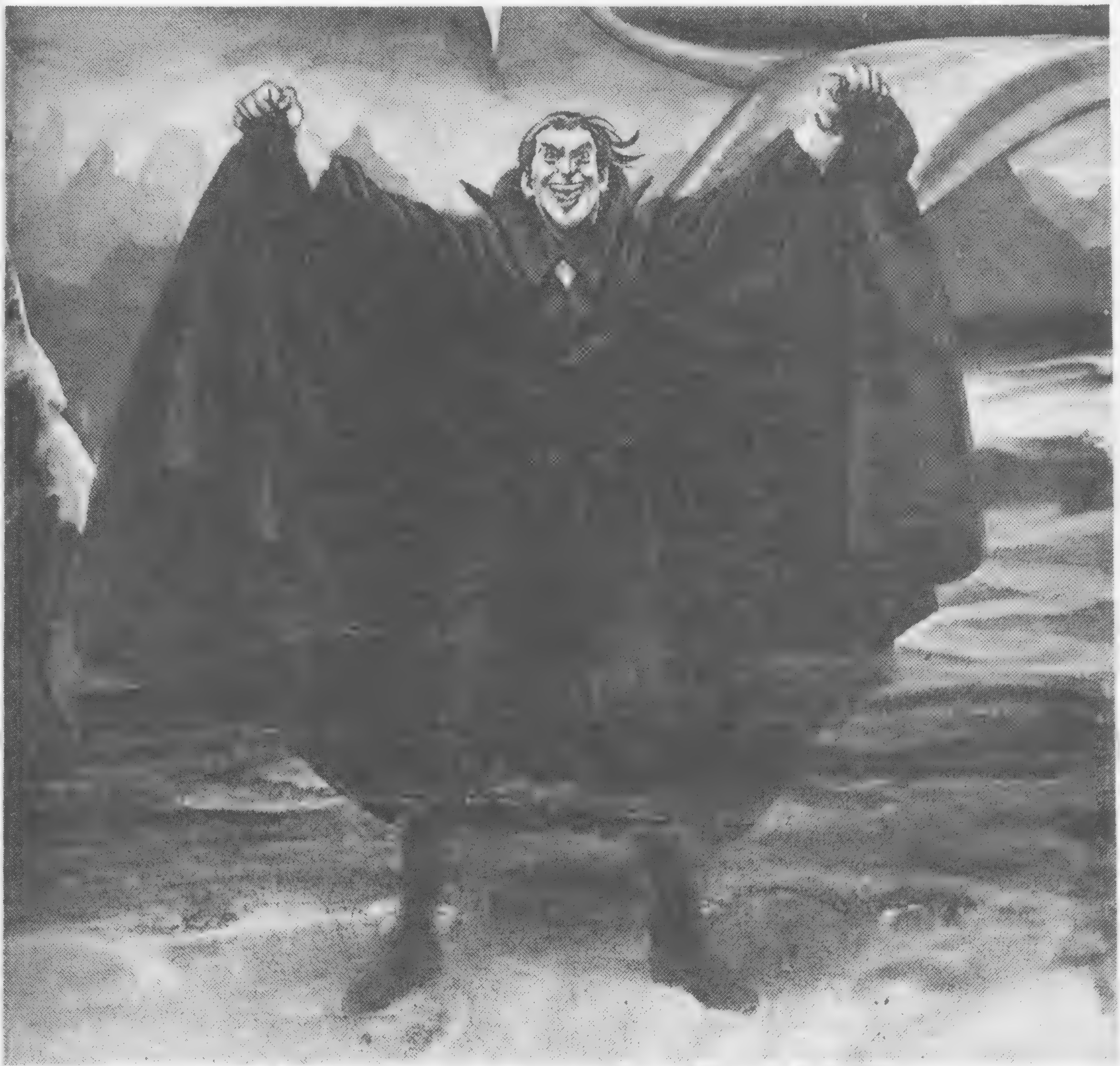
GRAY: They're paying pretty good. I'm doing okay.

DON: *Have they given you any visual reference on the new characters?*

GRAY: No, I haven't any material at all. I just have to guess.

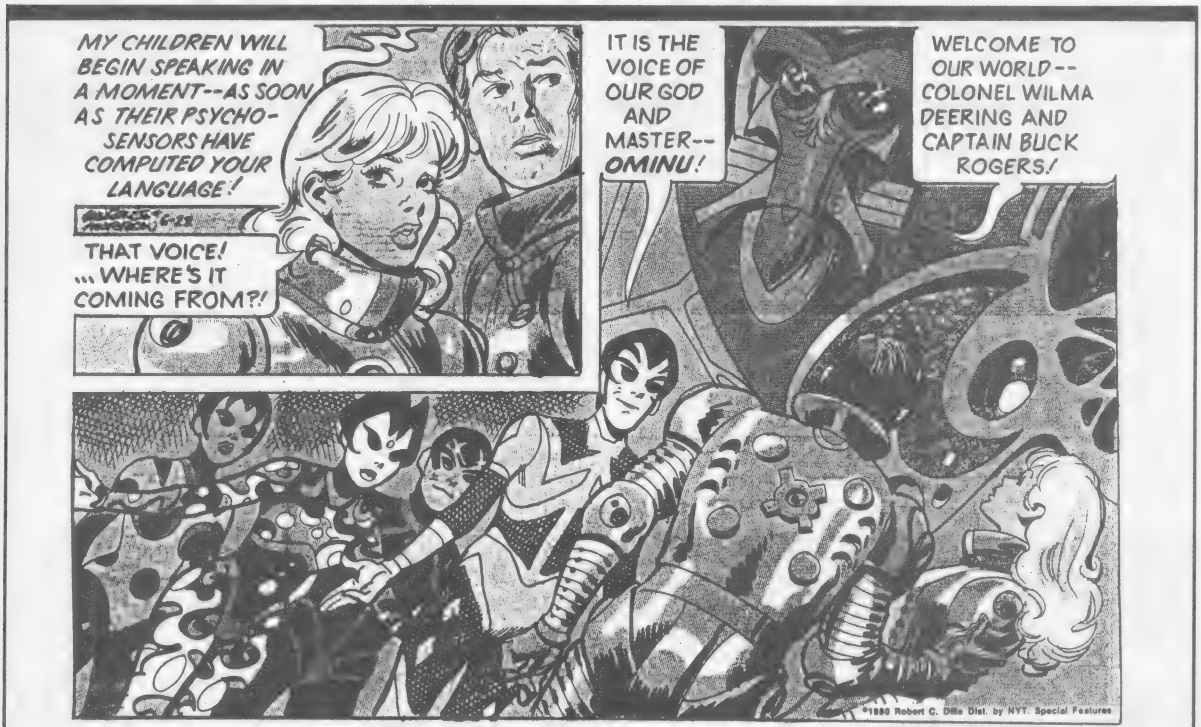
DON: *Well, the last one I wrote, they told me to use the new names, and didn't say anything about what kind of guys they are. So I just wrote them as if they're the same characters.*

I had to wait until the second season was well under way before I knew how the second season worked. And yet, they were demanding that everything I write conform to the second-season scenario. What do you do if they send you a script with names of characters you've never seen? You can't even watch the show,



Here's a sample of the art Gray was doing for Warren Publications in the 1960s.

"We have some plans for the Sunday TARZAN."


MY CHILDREN WILL BEGIN SPEAKING IN A MOMENT--AS SOON AS THEIR PSYCHO-SENSORS HAVE COMPUTED YOUR LANGUAGE!
THAT VOICE! ...WHERE'S IT COMING FROM?!
IT IS THE VOICE OF OUR GOD AND MASTER--OMINU!
WELCOME TO OUR WORLD--COLONEL WILMA DEERING AND CAPTAIN BUCK ROGERS!

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because they're not on yet.

GRAY: Just muddle through.

DON: *Do you have any kids, or younger relatives who watch the show?*

GRAY: I have a 15-year-old daughter.

DON: *That's probably too old for it.*

GRAY: Yeah. *(Laughter.)* Not a POWER RANGERS fan.

DON: *I'm telling you, when I told my kids' friends I was doing POWER RANGERS, I was an instant celebrity. I guess that doesn't work for a 15-year-old.*

GRAY: No, she's terribly unimpressed.

DON: *That's too bad. You know, I just glanced at the current TV GUIDE, and Meryl Streep says she got credibility with her kids because she's doing a voice on THE SIMPSONS.*

GRAY: *(Laughter.)* Well, my daughter was interested when I did BARBIE for a while.

DON: *I'll bet! I didn't know you did BARBIE.*

GRAY: Just a couple of episodes.

DON: *Any plans for grand projects, or anything?*

GRAY: Well, we have some plans for the Sunday episodes of TARZAN.

DON: *Now, the TARZAN daily strip is reprints of Russ Manning.*

GRAY: Right. The Sunday is *new* material. Recently, the writer managed to convince them to do a super opus involving other **Edgar Rice Burroughs** characters, such as John Carter of Mars, David Innes of Pellucidar, and all those other characters.

DON: *Oh, really? Who is the writer?*

GRAY: Don Kraar.

DON: *And when will this appear?*

GRAY: Right now — it started in newspapers in October.

DON: *Wow, that's great! Of course, you practically can't see the TARZAN Sunday strip, although the daily is carried in COMICS REVUE magazine.*

GRAY: No, it's hard to find in the States. Not many papers carry it here. But it's still pretty well circulated throughout the world.

DON: *How long is that going to run?*

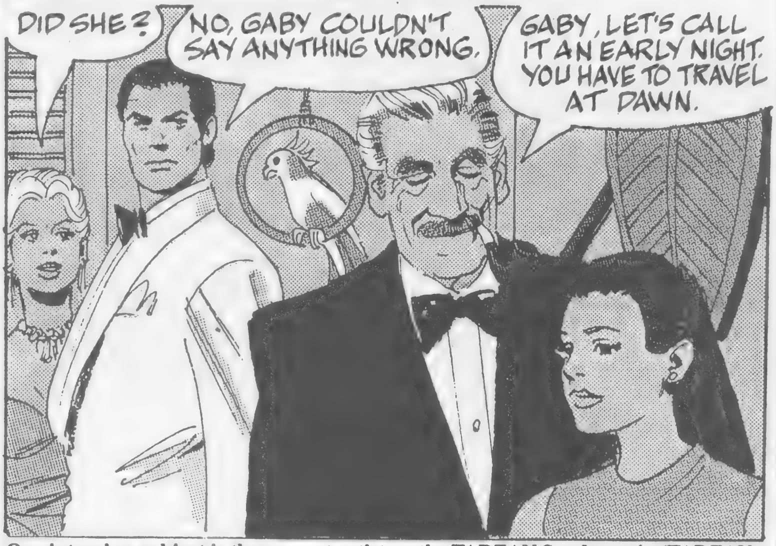
GRAY: About 24 weeks.

DON: *A regular epic! Any other plans?*

GRAY: That should keep me out of trouble for a while.

DON: *Any idea what you're going to be doing five years from now?*

GRAY: More of the same, I guess.


DID SHE?
NO, GABY COULDN'T SAY ANYTHING WRONG.
GABY, LET'S CALL IT AN EARLY NIGHT. YOU HAVE TO TRAVEL AT DAWN.

Our interview subject is the current artist on the TARZAN Sunday strip (TARZAN dailies, which appear monthly in COMICS REVUE, are curently reprinting Russ Manning's art from the 1970s). In this sample, the Ape Man appears in his Lord Greystoke personna. Gray's other syndicated strip work includes the most recent revival of BUCK ROGERS, a sample of which appears at top.

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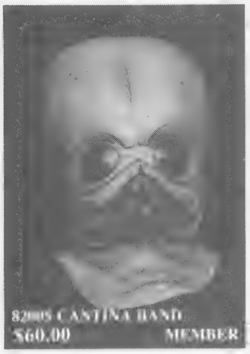

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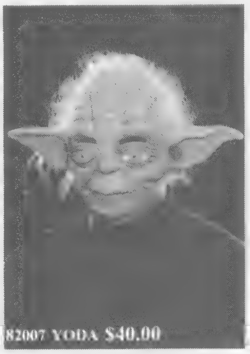

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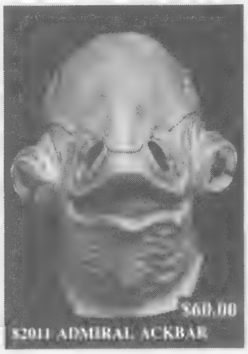

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"I worked with them on their EC-inspired horror line."

JOHN HEEBINK

The biggest thing in children's television right now seems to owe a great deal to comic books, in that it involves a group of teenage superheroes — complete with skin-tight costumes, secret identities and arch-enemies. Now, the debt is to be repaid, as MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS comes to comics. Herewith is a conversation between Don Markstein, main writer of Hamilton Comics' POWER RANGERS (whose own interview on POWER RANGERS — and more — appears in issue #135), and John Heebink, one of the artists . . .

JOHN HEEBINK: You work with COMICS REVUE?

DON MARKSTEIN: *Yes, I'm the editor.*

JOHN: And that's a magazine that reprints newspaper strips?

DON: *Are you familiar with it, or did you just hear about it someplace?*

JOHN: I just read a line about it somewhere in connection with you

DON: *It's been around about ten years now — we just passed our 100th issue.*

So — how did you come on with Gladstone Comics and POWER RANGERS and stuff?

JOHN: I had worked with them in the past when they were doing their EC-inspired black-and white horror line.

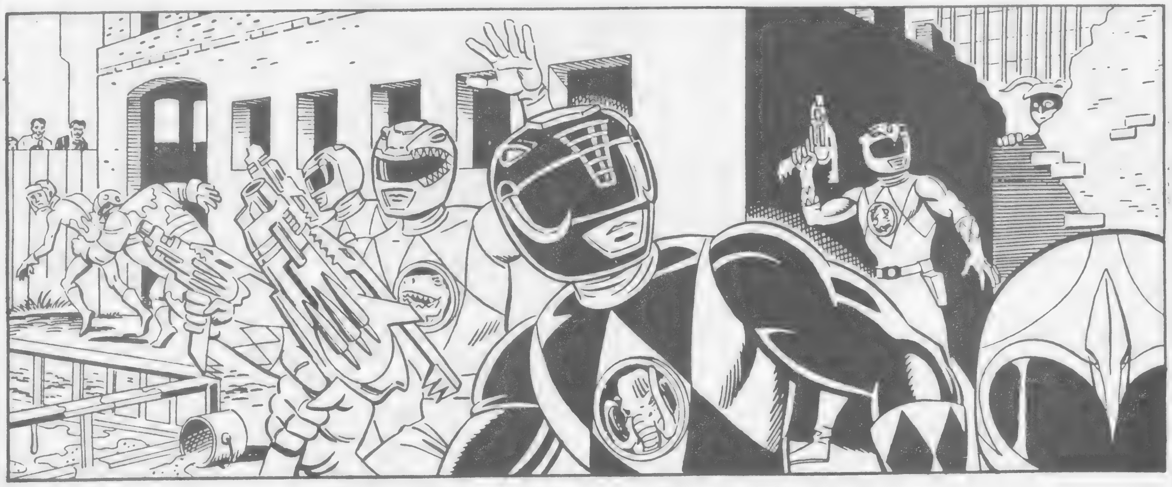
DON: *Well, didn't we all!* (Laughter.)

JOHN: Did you? I didn't know you had one of your stories there!

DON: *Yeah, I sold them two stories — one of which got published before the line got cancelled. Gray Morrow came on that way, Al Bigley — you know, just everybody that's working on the POWER RANGERS came on that way.*

JOHN: Gray Morrow did some beautiful stuff for them.

DON: *John Clark says it was a success*



Power Rangers fan out! From Hamilton Comics' POWER RANGERS #2, illustrated by John and written by Don.

MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS TM & ©1994 Saban Entertainment, Inc. & Saban International N.V. / EEK! THE CAT TM & ©1994 Fox Children's Network, Inc. / QUASAR TM & ©1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. / Black Pete & Old Yellow Beak TM & ©1940 The Walt Disney Company / METACOPS TM & ©1994 Link Yaco & John Heebink / "Grad Student Going Through Hell" ©1990 Portmanteau Productions

“Other cartoonists look at my stuff and think the cat-

in that it put them in touch with all the people they needed for doing this stuff.

So, what else have you done for Hamilton Comics?

JOHN: Well, I did that EEK! THE CAT story that you wrote. The title ran three issues, and I don't know if it's been on the newsstands *yet.*

DON: *Well, as a matter of fact, it never did make it into the comic-book stores.*

JOHN: Yeah, I understood it was only going out to newsstands.

DON: *I did like your EEK! THE CAT. I thought you did a terrific job. It captured my script exactly.*

Oh, by the way, you know, there was one page in that EEK! THE CAT story, which was a case of my anticipating the licensor's rejection by just not even submitting it. As it wound up, this giant chews Eek! up and spits him out in pieces, and he goes rolling out the alley and re-forms himself into a toon. But in my original idea — which I never even wrote down — the giant swallows *Eek!, and then visits an outhouse, you know, with the crescent carved in the door and all.* (Laughter.) *Then you see just a still shot of the outhouse with the door closed, then the giant's walking off with the door ajar, then a still shot of the door ajar — then Eek!* comes *staggering out, all covered with aroma lines.*

JOHN: I think you called that one right! *(Laughter.)*

DON: *I told John Clark about that, and he said yeah, he didn't see any point in bothering the licensor with it.*

Anyway, you were saying in an earlier conversation that you wish I would do fewer panels per page?

JOHN: I would like it if when you do a panel with a lot of action, that that panel be big, with maybe just two or three other panels on the page. I'm sort of spoiled by working at Marvel. You know, where you work from a plot and the guys are basically allowing you about five panels to the page — sometimes fewer when there's something big and exciting happening. So I've gotten kind of used to that.

DON: *Well, the standard Disney stuff is an eight-panel grid. And that's how I wrote EEK! THE CAT.*

JOHN: I think that works better with characters that have big heads! *(Laughter.)*

DON: *You know, Eisner says exactly the opposite. In COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART, he says that when you're doing fast action, you should be doing* small *panels.*

JOHN: Yeah, and he has this idea that a close-up stops the story. As a reader, I just don't find that to be true. Certainly, the kids that are enjoying Image Comics — I say “kids,” but I read them myself — they've learned a different way of reading comics.

DON: *So, you think a lot of what Eisner says was true then, but is not necessarily true now?*

JOHN: I can't say, because I haven't looked closely at that book. But I do think some things have changed, in the way that people are reading comics.

DON: *I think of that book as one of the three basic ones a comics creator should read, whether he agrees with everything in it or not — that, and Scott McCloud's UNDERSTANDING COMICS.*

The third is HOT TIPS FROM TOP COMICS CREATORS, which I edited. (Laughter.)

Getting back to the POWER RANGERS — I watch the show every day. How about you?

JOHN: Not *every* day. But frequently — fairly frequently.

DON: *Do you have kids?*

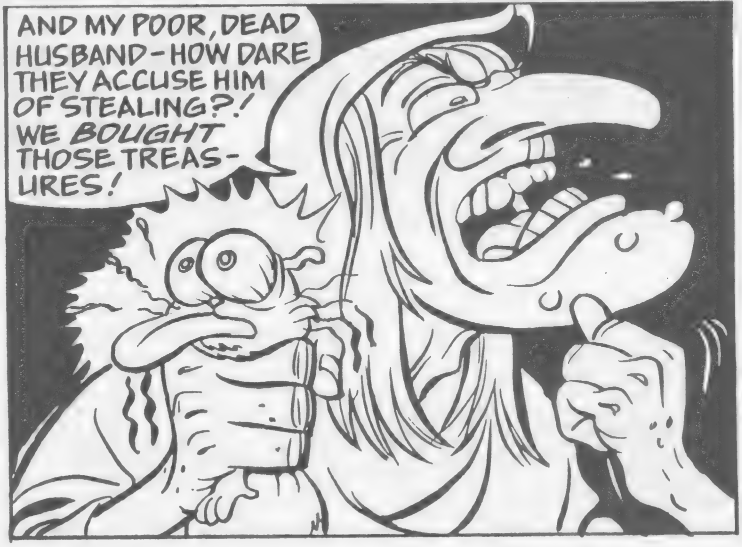
JOHN: No.

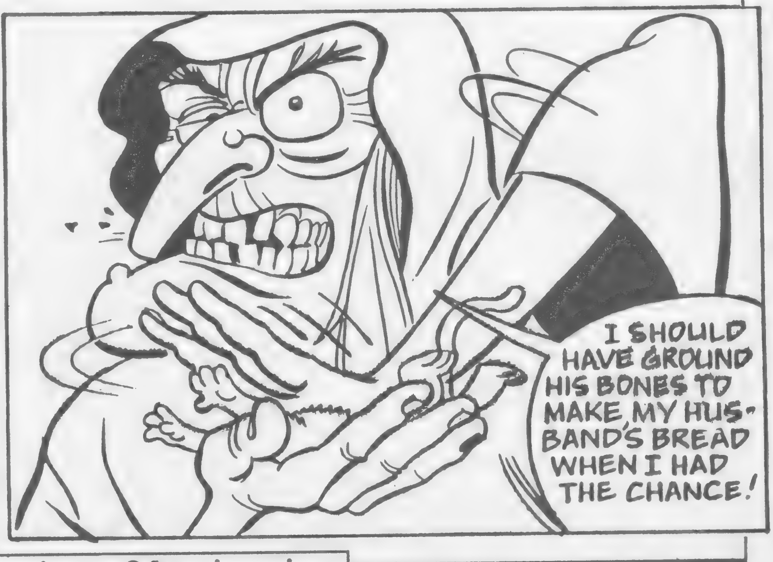
DON: *Oh, too bad!*

JOHN: I have this nightmare where the parents who are so pushy about getting the dolls for their kids find out I'm doing it. “Oh, can Timmy come over and watch you work and rummage through all your visual reference?” *(Laughter.)*

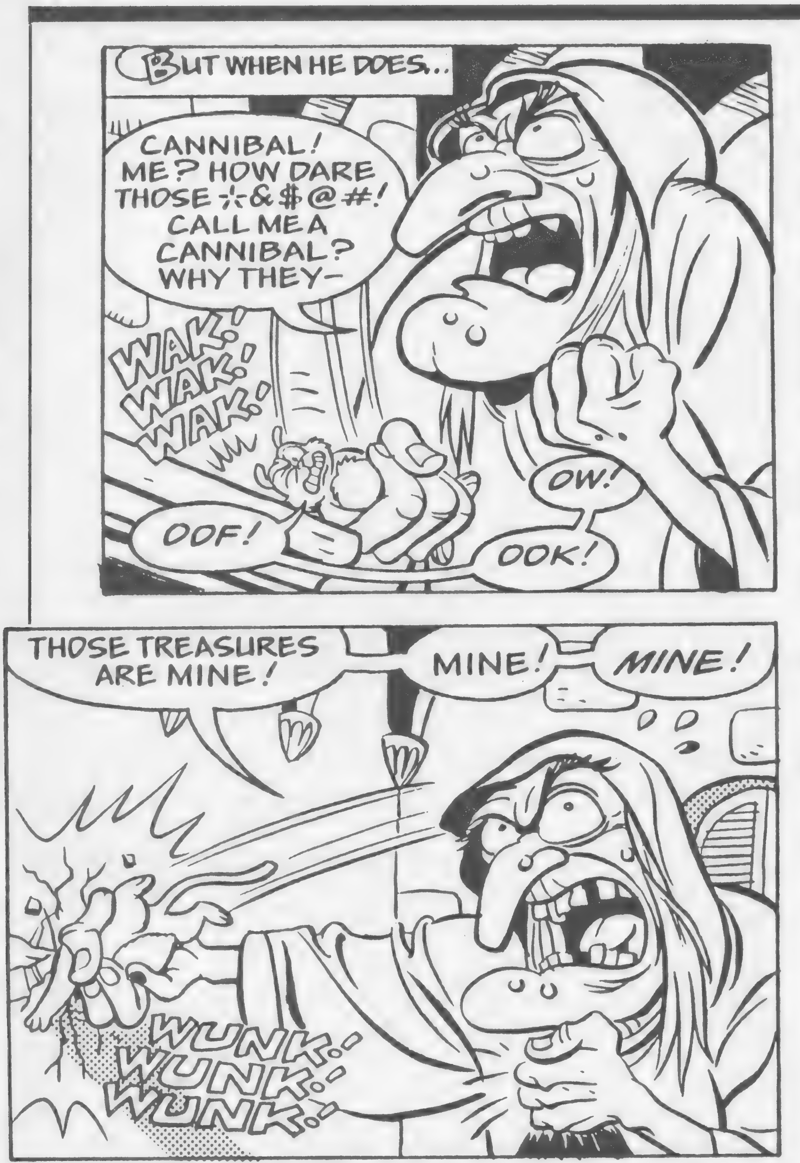
DON: *Do you have any trouble dealing with Saban, the owner of the POWER RANGERS property, as far as getting the stuff approved?*

JOHN: No — that's done by **John Clark** and the other guys at Hamilton. They're the ones who are really dealing with that. The changes that they make — you know,


AND MY POOR, DEAD HUSBAND - HOW DARE THEY ACCUSE HIM OF STEALING?! WE *BOUGHT* THOSE TREASURES!


I SHOULD HAVE GROUND HIS BONES TO MAKE MY HUSBAND'S BREAD WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE!

type stuff is more successful than my superhero stuff."


BUT WHEN HE DOES...
CANNIBAL! ME? HOW DARE THOSE ⁎&$@#! CALL ME A CANNIBAL? WHY THEY—
WAK! WAK! WAK!
OW!
OOF!
OOK!
THOSE TREASURES ARE MINE!
MINE!
MINE!
WUNK! WUNK! WUNK!

There's a feud between Jack's mother and the Giant's widow, in EEK! THE CAT #1 — written by Don and drawn by John. Sez John: "The nutsy witch was fun to draw!"

once it's on the page, making little fixes on faces and things goes really fast.

DON: *Yeah, most of the brain work is already done.*

JOHN: Right.

DON: *In #2 — which stories did you draw, by the way?*

JOHN: I drew, for #2, "Switcheroo," and "Grounded!" for #5.

DON: *Ah! Both are mine! In "Switcheroo," where they're confronting Ernie — now, the readers are not going to see this until late December and this COMICS INTERVIEW is going to go on sale in November, but maybe they'll remember this and maybe not. Anyway, here are the Power Rangers confronting Ernie, who is wearing this silly monster costume, and he can't get the head off. And the Red Ranger says "We'll get to the bottom of this right now," and pulls out his sword. I had a whole page of the sword coming down, and Ernie getting more and more scared, and finally we see this Ernie's-eye-view — you know, you're just looking at the sword coming down through these two eye-shaped holes in a black panel. You turn the page, and it turns out the sword has cut the fake head, not Ernie.*

Yellow Ranger says "Gee, wasn't that kind of a dangerous thing to do?" Red Ranger says "The Power Sword cuts what I want it to cut," Just the same, he turns around and addresses the reader — "I wouldn't do this if I hadn't had all this martial arts training." (Laughter.)

Well, they sent that back, and said, "Red Ranger does not swing his sword." (Laughter.)

JOHN: Even in the art, you had me raising his sword, and I had Ernie raising his hand — and they had me move it around and made me point it to make sure it was clear that Trini and Kim were stopping him.

DON: *You know, that was the best page I wrote in that whole issue! I turned it into a slapstick page, where they're all crowding around, trying to get the mask off, and they go rolling away.*

JOHN: That was tough! I didn't know quite how to handle that, because I was aware of all these sharp blades sticking out in all directions. I don't know if you're going to like the way I handled it.

DON: *Well, we'll see. Do you find it easy or hard to work with real human figures?*

JOHN: I find it hard. Other cartoonists look at my stuff, and they think the cat-type stuff is much more successful than my superhero stuff. I do like drawing the figure, but I don't do it with as much confidence. It's sort of a struggle.

DON: *But you're working for Marvel?*

JOHN: I *was* working for Marvel. I haven't been able to get any work out of them lately.

DON: *What did you do for them?*

JOHN: I was really lucky, initially, because my favorite Marvel character is Nick Fury, and that was the first title I got. I got it under circumstances where it was slated to be cancelled. It was on issue #41, and they were maybe going to bring it up to #50 for a special issue. They wound up cancelling it at #47. I guess, had I been able to singlehandedly turn the sales around, on this title that nobody was paying much attention to, that would have been a real feather in my cap.

DON: *Of course, Claremont did that with the X-MEN.*

JOHN: Is that right?

DON: *Not that they were going to be cancelled or anything, as far as I know, but they were always second-stringers. And then he comes along, and he's never done anything notable before, and he takes this second-string group and bang!*

JOHN: Well, I didn't do that.

DON: *Oh, well.*

JOHN: My next-to-last issue, I was really proud of. It was sort of sad to put a book like that out there, where it wouldn't be noticed.

And then QUASAR was a repeat of that, except I felt a little less simpatico

“I have a nightmare – parents find out I do this. ‘Can Timmy

PANEL 4
Focus on Red Ranger, who is raising his Power Sword with obvious intent to use it. Other visible Power Rangers gesture at him to stop. Ernie's jaw has gone slack and his eyes are bulging out of their sockets.

RED RANGER: He's lying! Ernie's back at the Youth Center! We saw him!
PINK RANGER: Red Ranger, no!
YELLOW RANGER: Don't!
BLACK RANGER: Stop!
BLUE RANGER: Refrain!
ERNIE: Gulp!

PANEL 5
Back on the Moon with Rita, who is watching all this in her telescope. Squatt, Baboo and Goldar are in their usual places, basking in the glow of her pleasure.

RITA: Hahahahaha! When Jason realizes he's harmed a friend, his career as a hero is over!

PAGE FOURTEEN (One sound effect runs through this entire page, snaking through all except Panel Three – SWOOOOOOOOOSH!)

PANEL 1
Red Ranger's Power Sword starts to come down on Ernie, while the others look on helplessly. Ernie's eyes are bulging worse than before. The white flag is slipping from his limp fingers.

RED RANGER: I'm getting to the bottom of this – now!
ERNIE: Ng-ng-ng-ng-ng!

PANEL 2
Close-up of Red Ranger's Power Sword swooshing through the air.

PANEL 3
Back on the Moon, Rita is rolling on the floor, waving her arms and kicking her feet in the air in sheer, exuberant joy. Squatt and Baboo are dancing like two-year-olds desperate to keep their diapers dry. Goldar is shaking his sword triumphantly.

RITA: Heeehehehahaha! Oh, this is better than I ever expected! Screeeeeeech!

PANEL 4
Ernie sits transfixed, unable to take his eyes off the sword, which is no more than three inches from his nose and descending fast. Ernie's eyes are about to pop out of their sockets.

ERNIE: Agh-agh-agh-agh!

PANEL 5
Wide angle – spans bottom tier. Two eye-shaped holes in an otherwise black panel show an Ernie's-eye view of the gleaming sword hurtling straight toward him. Ernie's scream appears in the form of display lettering.

ERNIE: Aaaarrrrrrrrrrrggggggghhhhhh!

PAGE FIFTEEN

PANEL 1
Ernie is still on his knees, his true identity now obvious – the Goatman head is split in half. Red Ranger grips his Power Sword very tightly, with both hands – obviously, he has maintained perfect control over it all through its descent. Everyone (except Red Ranger, who knew exactly what he was doing) seems relieved – especially Ernie, who is numb with relief.

BLACK RANGER: Oh, man! We thought –
RED RANGER: It is you! Then who –
ERNIE: I – I'm still here! And –

PANEL 2
Back on the Moon, Rita is gnashing her teeth in frustration. Squatt and Baboo tremble in anticipation of her wrath. Goldar shakes his sword in anger. Finster's voice again comes from inside, off-panel.

RITA: Curses! Well, there's still the second part of my plan! Finster! Where's that monster?
FINSTER: Ready when you are, Mistress of Malice!

PANEL 3
Back at the demolition site, the Power Rangers are still clustered around Ernie, who is feeling his chest with one hand and his head with the other. Yellow Ranger has reached out and is touching Red Ranger's elbow. They and whichever others happen to appear in this panel have all had their attention diverted from Ernie.

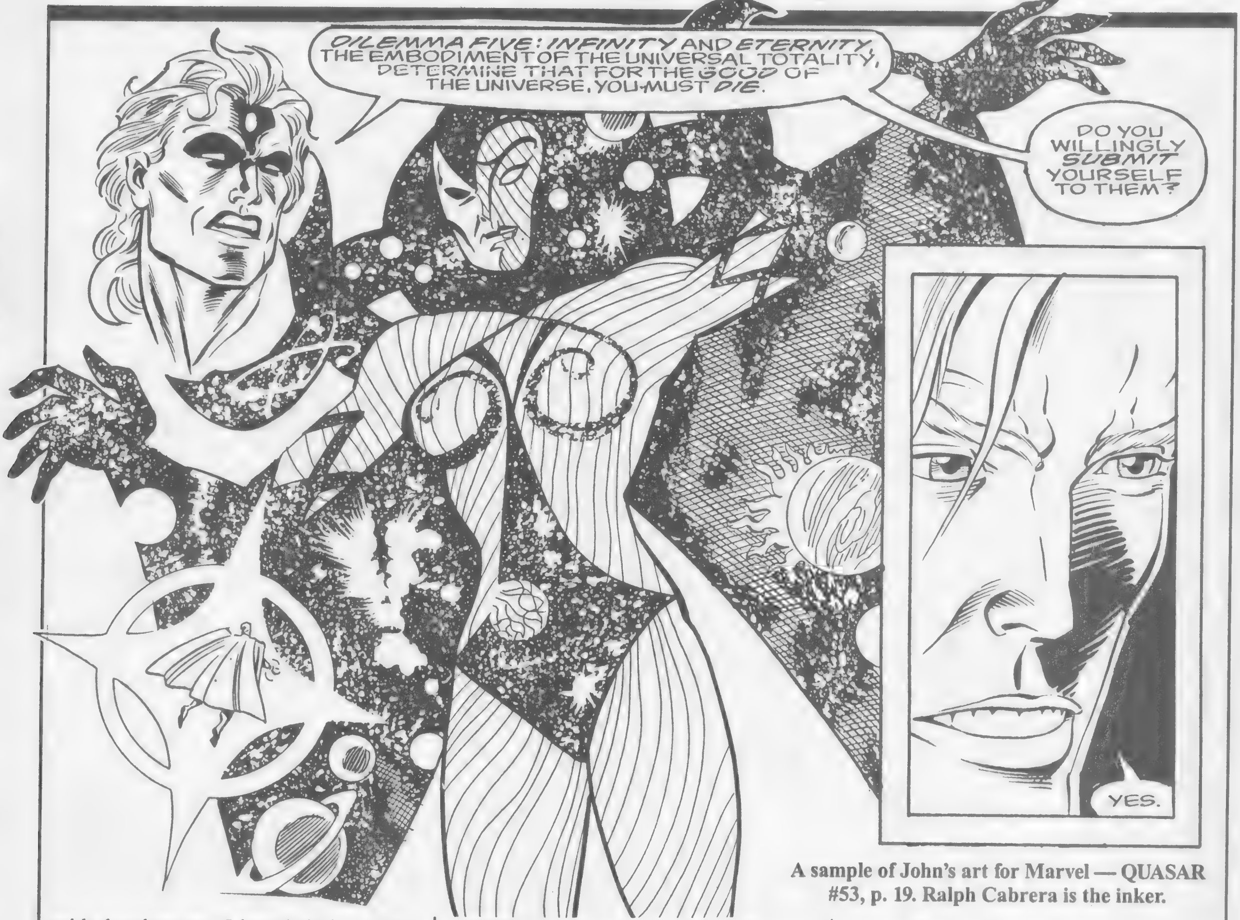
YELLOW RANGER: But Ja – uh, Red Ranger – wasn't that a dangerous thing to do?
RED RANGER: The Power Sword cuts what I want it to cut! Of course –
ERNIE: – and – I'm all in one piece – and –

PANEL 4
Focus on Red Ranger, who is still talking to Yellow Ranger but has turned slightly and now seems to be addressing the reader directly. Ernie is reaching down to grab his cocoon fragment.

RED RANGER: – I wouldn't have dared it without my years of martial arts training!
ERNIE: – and these are the Power Rangers – and –
COMMUNICATORS: DEET-DEET DEEDEE DEET-DEEEEE

Here's a rare glimpse of a Power Rangers comic-book script, as it appeared before changes were ordered by the licensor. Aside from the major change — Red Ranger does not swing his sword — references to Rita, here and throughout the script, were changed to Lord Zedd. “I'm going to miss Rita,” says writer Don Markstein. “She was really manic. I don't think I could have Lord Zedd rolling on the floor with glee, the way Rita does here.”

watch you work and rummage through your reference?'”


DILEMMA FIVE: INFINITY AND ETERNITY, THE EMBODIMENT OF THE UNIVERSAL TOTALITY, DETERMINE THAT FOR THE GOOD OF THE UNIVERSE, YOU MUST DIE.
DO YOU WILLINGLY SUBMIT YOURSELF TO THEM?
YES.

A sample of John's art for Marvel — QUASAR #53, p. 19. Ralph Cabrera is the inker.

with the character. I lasted six issues on that. In between, I had one DAREDEVIL ANNUAL story, and that's almost the extent of my work for Marvel.

DON: *Well, I haven't worked for Marvel at all. So there. I've worked mostly for Disney, Gladstone and smaller publishers. I got my start working for Disney.*

JOHN: When they were their own publisher?

DON: *Yeah. You know, I've been writing, mostly in the journalism field, for 25 years —*

JOHN: Oh!

DON: *Didn't know I was that old, eh?* (Laughter.) *Anyway, I did a little bit in comics journalism, and was talking with Disney editor Bob Foster, and it turns out he's a Bucky Bug fan, same as I am. You've never even heard of Bucky Bug, I'll bet.*

JOHN: That's right.

DON: *The last Bucky Bug story came out in 1950, which I'll bet was before you were born!*

JOHN: That's right.

DON: *Anyway, the stories were told in rhyme, and that really goes over with the kids when you read it aloud. So the first story I sold was a Bucky Bug.*

JOHN: Are you a teacher? How do you come into contact with these kids?

DON: *My own kids brag in school about their daddy, the writer. A couple of years ago my now-10-year-old's fourth-grade teacher asked if I could come in for Authors Week and give a talk for the kids. So I gave a little talk on comic-book writing, and read them a Carl Barks story with an overhead projector — I just love reading Carl Barks out loud. The guy's dialog is wonderful when spoken aloud.*

JOHN: That's the acid test, too. I don't know how much comics writing can stand to be read aloud.

DON: *I'm not so sure that's a necessary thing. It's great when you can read it aloud, but if you can't, really, it's not designed for that. There's a lot of really good writing that you simply can't say aloud. My father used to write advertising copy, and when he was writing for radio, they'd give him guidelines, things you can't put in because when you talk into a microphone it'll sound wrong — but it was okay to put it in print.*

Anyway, last year, when the same kid was in fifth grade, I gave another little talk, and at that time there was just the possibility that I would actually do some POWER RANGERS stuff. I had submitted one plot then. The kids went wild when they heard that. And when they sent their little thank-you notes — by the way, if you ever do a talk in school, one of the nicest rewards is, they send you a packet of thank-you notes from all the kids — anyway, many of the notes included suggestions for POWER RANGERS monsters, or for other types of characters. And I've used a couple of those in stories. You know, make a little footnote that such-and-such was suggested by so-and-so, and the kid will get a free copy, and he'll show his friends — and boy, will he be a celebrity!

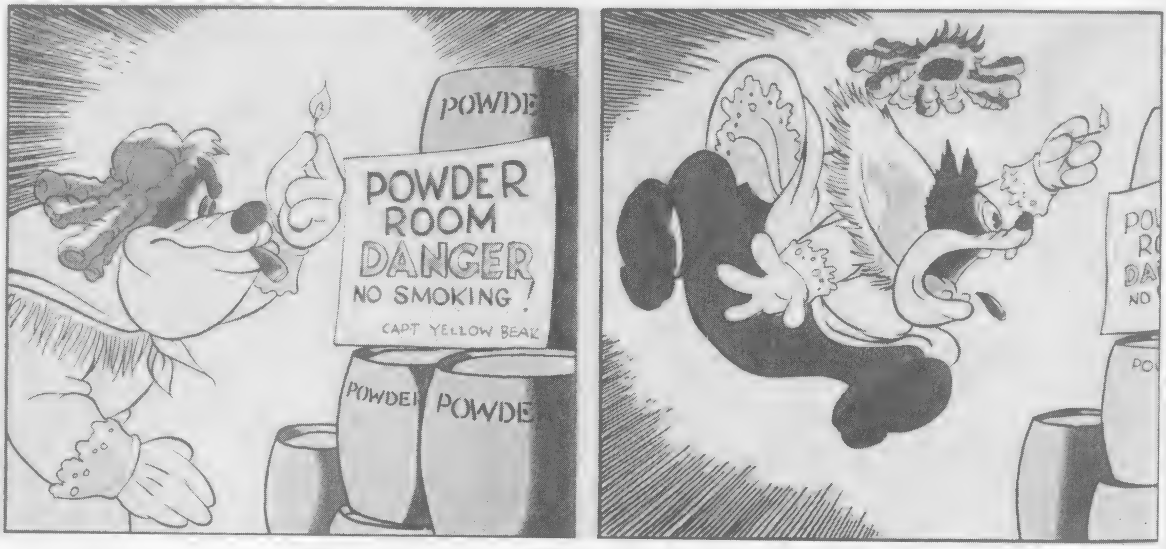
I think once one of those appears, Gladstone will get flooded with them, and I won't be able to use the local kids anymore.

JOHN: *(Laughter.)* Yeah, some smart kid's going to notice that they're all from Arizona.

About this Kid Zippo — in “Grounded!” — I was thinking of drawing him sort of humanoid and a bit monsterish, in sort of a benign way. Remember Babe Ruthless on the show?

DON: *Oh, yeah!*

“Gary Leach asked if I’d be interested. I said, ‘No, I don’t



JOHN: Can you see what I’m getting at? Does that sound appropriate?

DON: *Well, you’re the artist — you’re the one who can decide that best. I picture these things in my head when I’m writing them, and I describe them as well as I can. But what I see in my head is fuzzy at best, and if you see it differently, just do it your way. Did they send you that copy of Ryan Reading’s drawing of Kid Zippo?*

JOHN: Yes.

DON: *Anything that even comes close — in fact, Ryan probably doesn’t remember the drawing well enough to where he’ll see too much of a discrepancy. He’ll be glad to claim it, whatever it looks like. Do whatever you think best.*

JOHN: Sounds reasonable.

DON: *When did you first hear about Hamilton doing POWER RANGERS?*

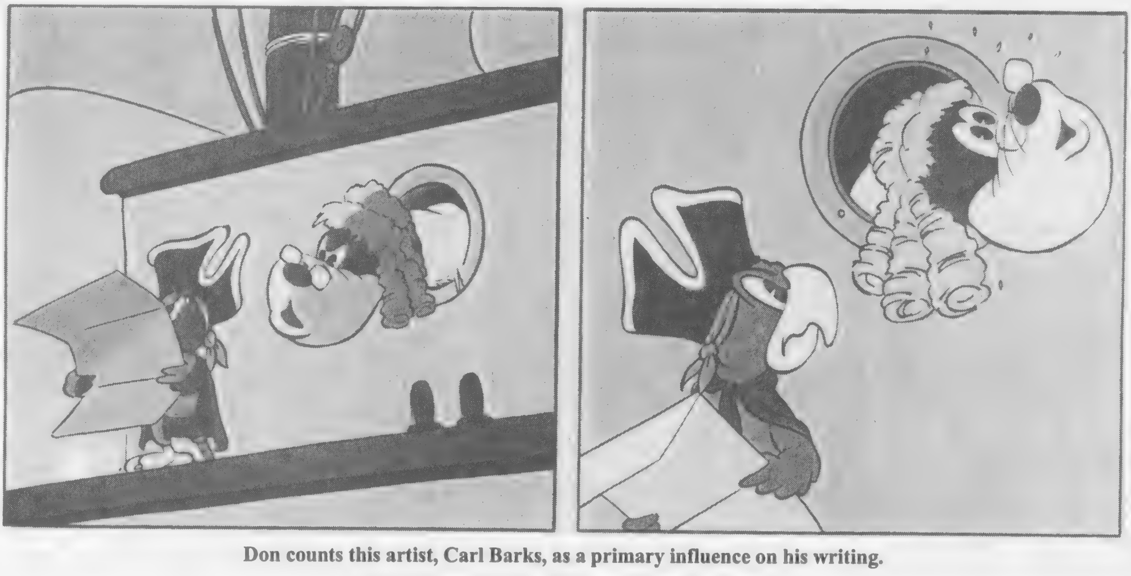
JOHN: I think I was working on NICK FURY at the time. **Gary Leach,** the art director at Hamilton, gave me a call and asked if I’d be interested in doing it. At this point, all I’d seen was a little bit of an ad on Fox TV for the show. It showed a robot morphing into a different robot. I’d seen something on USA Channel or something like that NIGHTFLIGHT show, a re-dubbed show called DYNA-MAN, another that has the same basic premise that the POWER RANGERS is based on. And I said to Gary, no, I don’t want to draw a lot of robots. I’m really bad at machinery and stuff like that. I’m impatient with it, and I don’t do a very good job with it. He tried to convince me of what later proved to be true, that the story only had fairly short intervâls with robot action. And the comic has much more of the human part than even the TV show does. For some reason — I guess because I was wrapped up in wanting to be a Marvel artist — I said no.

Luckily, after the show became a hit, Gary gave me a second shot at it.

DON: *What luck!*

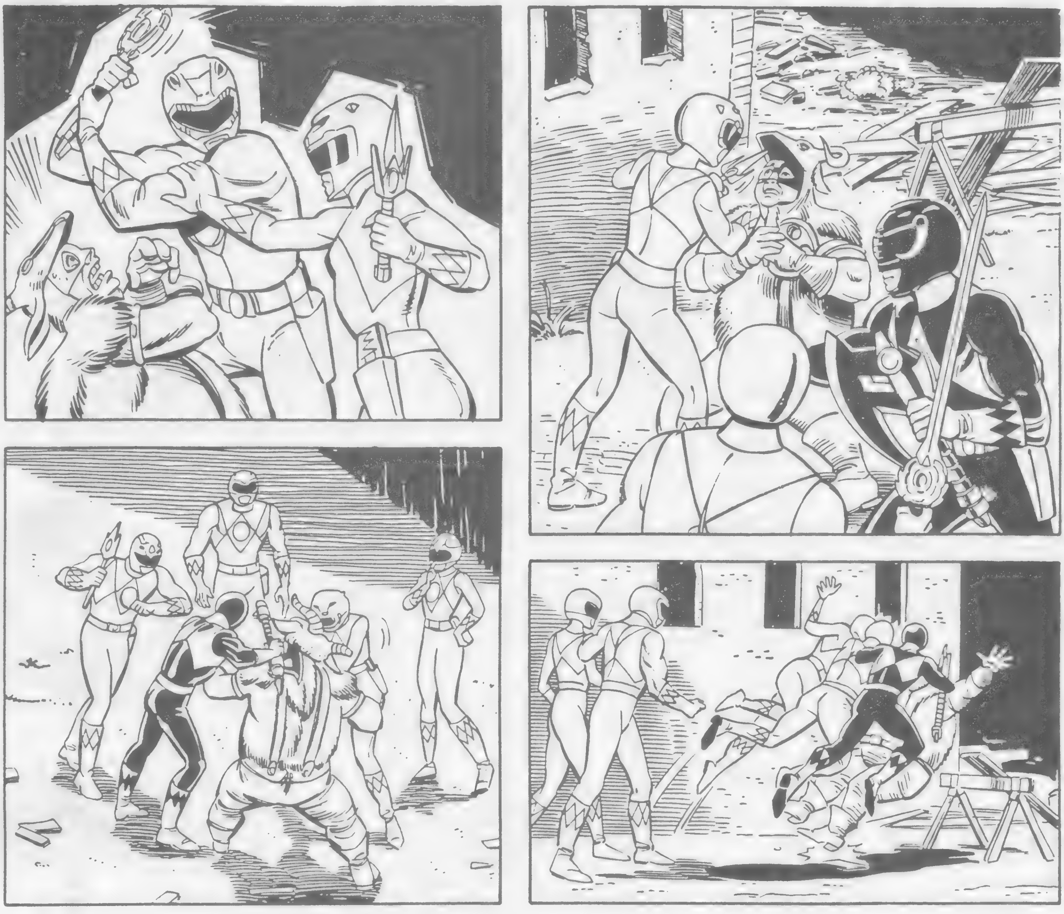
JOHN: I think this was after the hassles with the first issue. I’d seen the ad for it a long, long time ago.

DON: *That was right about the time I was submitting my first couple of plots. I did three plots originally. I watched the show for a week and figured okay, I’ve got this down pat, and wrote a plot just like what I’d seen. Then I watched it*



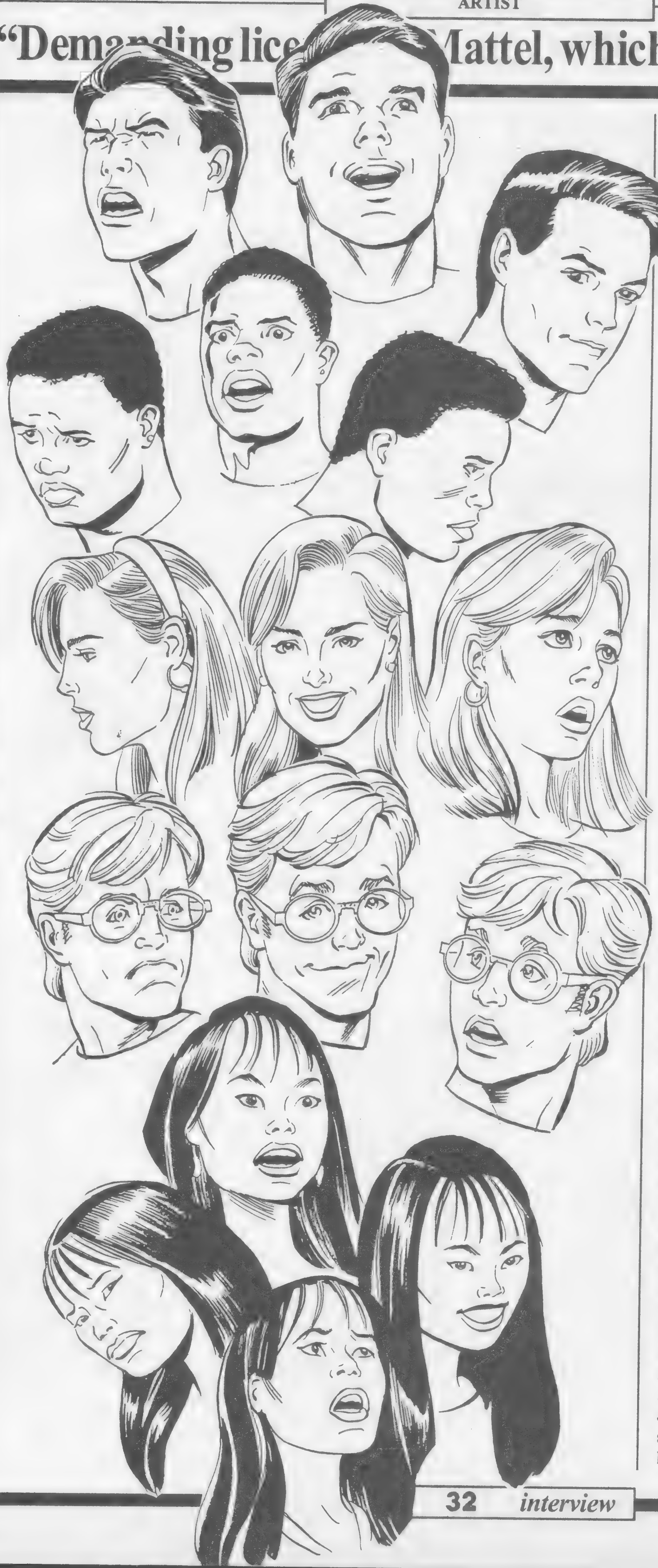
Don counts this artist, Carl Barks, as a primary influence on his writing.

want to draw robots.' Luckily, he gave me a second shot."



Here's the art for the page that replaced the one where Red Ranger swung his sword, the script for which is three pages back.

“Demanding lice Mattel, which does Barbie. ‘Not



another week and wrote a plot that sort of played with it a little. A couple of weeks after that, I wrote a plot with the same characters, that wasn't much like one of the TV plots at all.

Guess which plot they went for! (Laughter.)

Actually, “Grounded!” was the second plot. I revised it to make it a better fit, because I really wanted to do that one. It deals with a definite problem teenagers have — I mean, how can a teenage superhero save the world if he's grounded? I'm surprised they haven't done it on TV.

JOHN: I guess you're the guy who has to do most of the work trying to please Saban. Most of the revisions must come in the writing.

DON: *I've only had a little bit kicked back for revision. But then, I watch the show every day, and I really try to stick to what I can see that they want.*

There was one point in “Switcheroo,” where I actually did something that had been on TV, and they didn't like it. They're talking about the new Power Rangers T-shirts that just hit the mall, and Billy says, “I hope the Blue Ranger looks good;” and Jason says, “I'm partial to the Red Ranger,” and on like that. They said “No, no, no, the Power Rangers wouldn't be so egotistical.” So I had to change the dialog there. But they did that on the show! They've done that several times!

JOHN: I was really expecting to get the art back, all marked up, because I've got some friends who have worked for some very demanding licensors — like Mattel, who does BARBIE. They don't like to see her with too much vitality. Please try to capture the look of a staring mask of feminity. *(Laughter.)*

DON: *Have you heard about the Divorcee Barbie?*

JOHN: No.

DON: *She comes with all the usual accessories, plus all of Ken's stuff.*

JOHN: *(Laughter.)* But that wasn't really my experience with the POWER RANGERS stuff. Of the revisions they sent back, 90% made sense.

DON: *Have you done licensed work before?*

JOHN: Only EEK! THE CAT.

By the way. did you ever see **Peter David's** “But I Digress” column about doing appearances in front of kids?

DON: *I'm sure I saw it, but I don't recall it offhand.*

JOHN: I wish I'd kept it, because he had some suggestions. He being a writer also, he had to find ways of making it visual for

too much vitality . . . the look of a staring mask . . .?"

the kids. So he would whip up some dialog for a panel, and have kids come out and hold the poses that were called for.

DON: *Oh, neat!*

JOHN: He said it went over gangbusters. He had them say the corny dialog — "Take that, varlet," or whatever.

DON: *You know, I've got a store appearance coming up in December. Hi-De-Ho Comics in California — they didn't want the POWER RANGERS artist; they wanted the writer. Since it's a TV show, and since they're going after the general public with this instead of the superhero fans, if they advertise the artist the general public will think "What artist? It's a TV show!" But if you advertise a writer, sure, fine.*

JOHN: Well, I definitely hope they promote your appearance. I've got a challenge before me now, trying to figure out how to get likenesses of these three new kids, that we haven't seen yet.

DON: *Really!*

JOHN: I did a convention last weekend, and kids seem to be familiar with the characters who are going to become the Red and Black Rangers, although they didn't know they were going to.

DON: *Now wait a second — there are new characters in the show. There's Richie, who's working part-time for Ernie, but the new Red Ranger is a kid named* Rocky.

JOHN: Has he appeared in an episode yet?

DON: *I don't believe so. They had one episode where Lord Zedd recruited these five kids to be the Dark Rangers. He had them all set to go, and then that was the last gasp of Tommy's power. Only a non-Power Ranger could approach this crystal, and Tommy had just used up the last of his power, so he got to be a hero without being a Power Ranger — which I thought was a nice touch. At the end, the Power Rangers kids shook hands with the kids who had been recruited to be the Dark Rangers and said let's be friends now — but we haven't seen them since. I don't know the names of any of these guys or anything.*

I don't know about these guys. All I know is, the plot for "Grounded!" came back last month with the old names scratched out and the new names written in. That's it.

JOHN: Seems like they could give me some pictures.

DON: *I should think!*

How did you first get into the comics field?

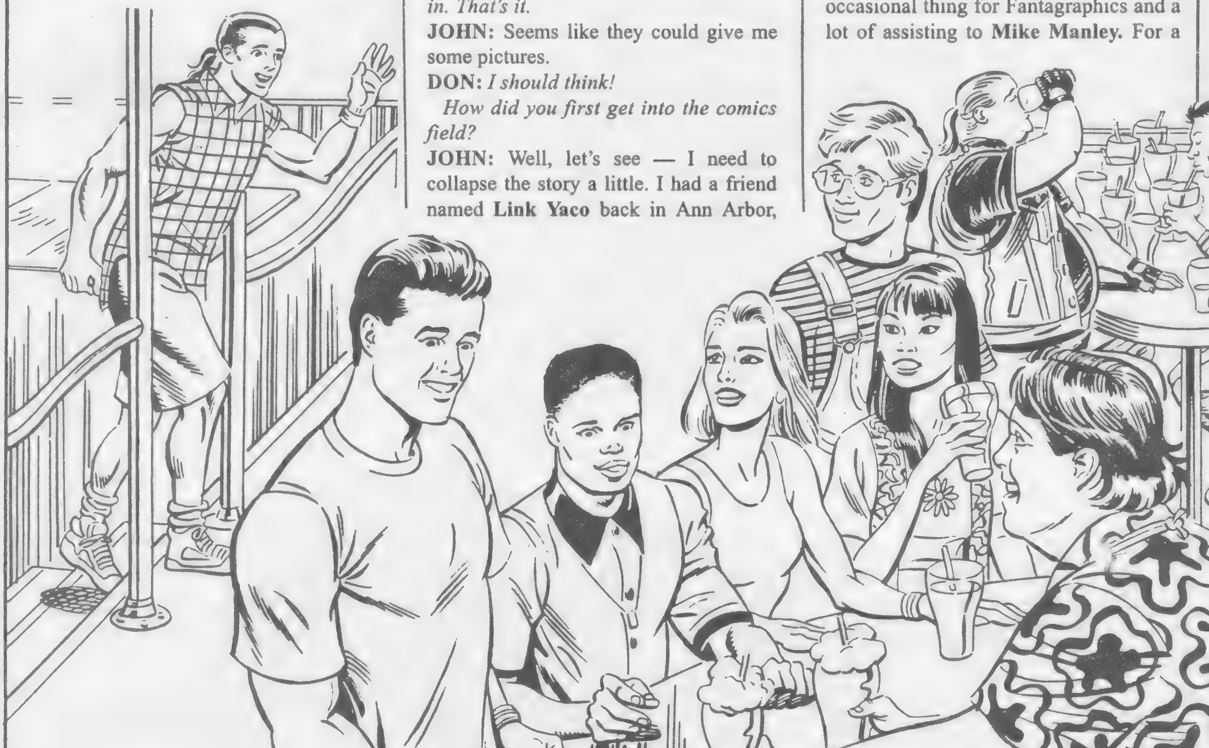
JOHN: Well, let's see — I need to collapse the story a little. I had a friend named **Link Yaco** back in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He had I worked together on a project he dreamed up, called METACOPS. It was the same concept as the current movie hit, TIMECOP, about policing the flow of history from destruction by evilly-motivated time travelers.

DON: *Don't you hate that! Somebody else comes along and makes a fortune!*

JOHN: Yeah, and it happens over and over again. You'll have a daydream, and you'll forget about it, then you see the idea become a hit.

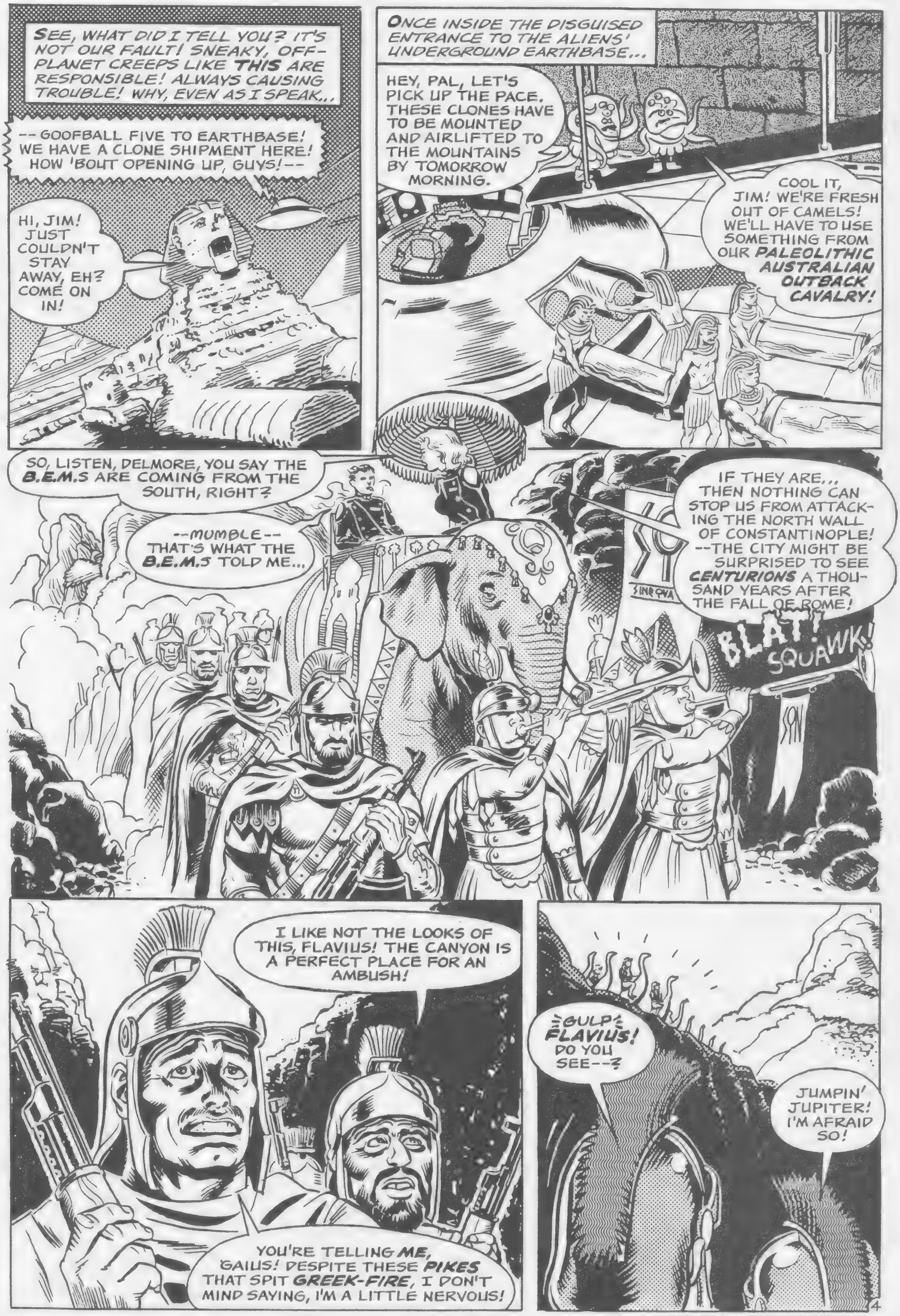
Originally, METACOPS was going to be published in a magazine that **Mike Manley** was going to produce. He's a friend of mine, a BATMAN artist. He was just getting back into comic books at this time. For one reason or another, that didn't happen, So we shopped METACOPS around, and Fantagraphics, which was starting this new Monster Comics line, the highlight of which was **Don Simpson's** KING KONG — I mean, the highlight of which was METACOPS! *(Laughter.)*

That only lasted three issues, but that was my first comic-book work. For a while I didn't do much other than an occasional thing for Fantagraphics and a lot of assisting to **Mike Manley.** For a



Facing page: faces from POWER RANGERS model sheets by John Heebink. Top to bottom: Jason, Zack, Kimberly, Billy and Trini. Above, the same characters by the same artist, in a story situation, with other series regulars — Tommy, Bulk, Skull and Ernie — added. John credits Aaron McClellan with a lot of high-quality inking help on this issue.

“Far as I'm concerned, Carl Barks is the best artist/writer


SEE, WHAT DID I TELL YOU? IT'S NOT OUR FAULT! SNEAKY, OFF-PLANET CREEPS LIKE THIS ARE RESPONSIBLE! ALWAYS CAUSING TROUBLE! WHY, EVEN AS I SPEAK...
-- GOOFBALL FIVE TO EARTHBASE! WE HAVE A CLONE SHIPMENT HERE! HOW 'BOUT OPENING UP, GUYS!--
HI, JIM! JUST COULDN'T STAY AWAY, EH? COME ON IN!
ONCE INSIDE THE DISGUISED ENTRANCE TO THE ALIENS' UNDERGROUND EARTHBASE...
HEY, PAL, LET'S PICK UP THE PACE. THESE CLONES HAVE TO BE MOUNTED AND AIRLIFTED TO THE MOUNTAINS BY TOMORROW MORNING.
COOL IT, JIM! WE'RE FRESH OUT OF CAMELS! WE'LL HAVE TO USE SOMETHING FROM OUR PALEOLITHIC AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK CAVALRY!
SO, LISTEN, DELMORE, YOU SAY THE B.E.M.S ARE COMING FROM THE SOUTH, RIGHT?
--MUMBLE-- THAT'S WHAT THE B.E.M.S TOLD ME...
IF THEY ARE... THEN NOTHING CAN STOP US FROM ATTACKING THE NORTH WALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE! --THE CITY MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO SEE CENTURIONS A THOUSAND YEARS AFTER THE FALL OF ROME!
SINE QUA
BLAT! SQUAWK!
I LIKE NOT THE LOOKS OF THIS, FLAVIUS! THE CANYON IS A PERFECT PLACE FOR AN AMBUSH!
YOU'RE TELLING ME, GAIUS! DESPITE THESE PIKES THAT SPIT GREEK-FIRE, I DON'T MIND SAYING, I'M A LITTLE NERVOUS!
GULP FLAVIUS! DO YOU SEE--?
JUMPIN' JUPITER! I'M AFRAID SO!
4

in comic books, ever." "Take that, Frank Miller fans!"

period, most of of my time was occupied by advertising work. The only reason I mention this is because it was all comic-book-style advertising art. Through that period, I got better at the bigfoot stuff, so if you like that EEK! THE CAT STORY, that's due to the work I did on these ads.

DON: *Who do you count as your influences?*

JOHN: **Wally Wood** — anybody who's read METACOPS can see that — and **Neal Adams, Al Williamson, Howard Chaykin** — he's really strong with expressions. His faces always looked really sharp. Those are the main guys.

DON: *You know, people think I'm out of my mind when I say my main influence in comics is Carl Barks.*

JOHN: Well, he wrote.

DON: *Yeah. People think of him as an artist, but man, his pacing, his dialog — the guy was just a fabulous writer! Still is, I'm sure, though he doesn't write very much anymore. Anyway, he influenced me from the word go. In fact, my younger daughter, who is now 10 — when she was about 6, maybe 7, she was surprised by something and she popped out with this phrase, "Oh, my aching eyeballs!" And of course, everybody in the whole family broke out laughing, and I was the only one who knew where it came from.* (Laughter.) *Yes, I'm raising a couple of Carl Barks fans.*

JOHN: You know, a **Carl Barks** story that had a big impact on me was one I had read as a little kid. Donald had won a contest for correctly reciting the last lines of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

DON: *Oh yes, I remember that one.*

JOHN: That story was dark! I mean, if you're a 6- or 7-year-old in sunny California — it was very off-putting for me. I'm not sure I ever recovered from that.

I remember reading some of the adventurous stories, where they'd go to places that seemed vaguely like Peru or Mexico and discover these archaeological wonderlands. And I remember liking the art on those, but he never had a big influence on me.

DON: *You know, he is credited with having an influence on Steven Spielberg.*

JOHN: Oh, with RAIDERS?

DON: *Yeah, that famous story. For the benefit of anybody who doesn't happen to know it, traps that the characters once ran into, that had been set by the ancient Indians in Peru, were identical to those that later turned up in RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK. Here's Indiana Jones, running through the same set of traps Uncle Scrooge ran through years earlier.*

As far as I'm concerned, Barks is it. He's the top, the best artist/writer in comic books, ever!

JOHN: Take that, **Frank Miller** fans! *(Laughter.)*

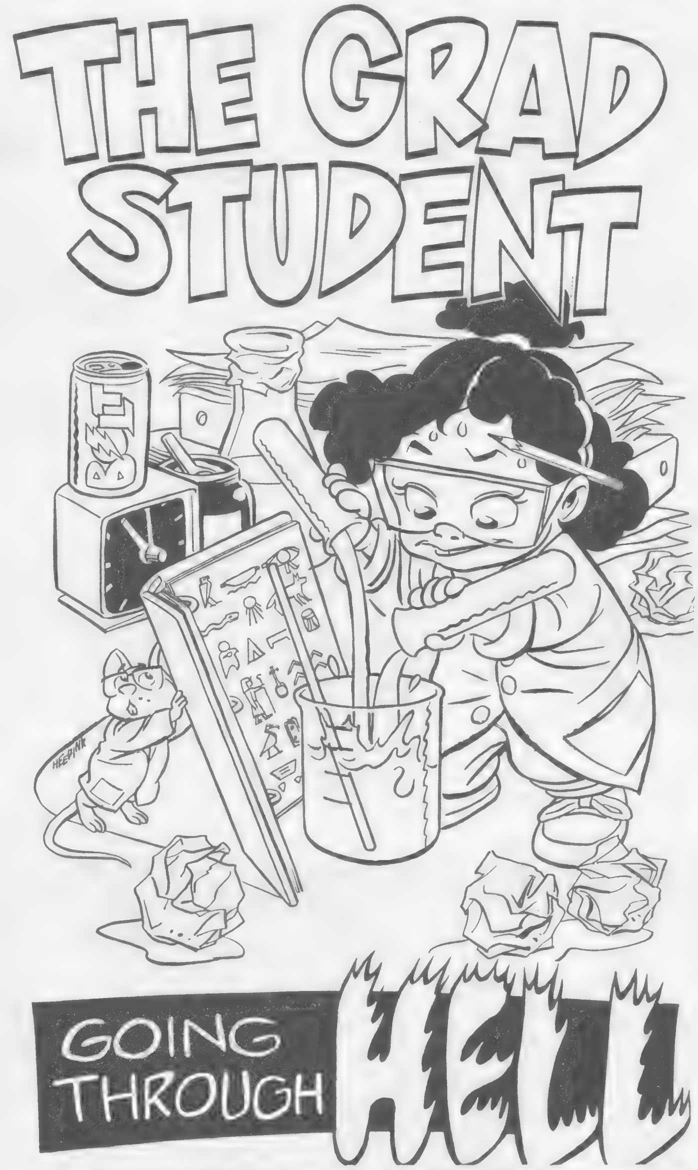
DON: *What about plans for the future? Any ideas what you're going to be doing five years from now, or six months from now, or even next week?*

JOHN: Six months from now, I might be settling into a new place in California. All my family and a lot of my friends are out there, so I may relocate.

I hope in five years — it's not likely, but I'd like to think I'll still be working on the POWER RANGERS. You never know what the shelf life of a kid-driven trend is going to be.

DON: *Well, if it's not the POWER RANGERS, there'll be something else very much like it out there, in terms of impact and market appeal.*

JOHN: It's hard to project five years from now in this business, because it seems to be so changeable. We're going through big changes now, with market shrinkage and withering of the back-issue market, and the entry of new cross-pollinations like whatever it is that Tekno Comics is trying to do, and Marvel mak-



On the facing page is a sample from John's first published comics work, METACOPS. As John says, the Wood influence is apparent. Here, we see an example of his non-comics work — a 1990 T-shirt design.

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1
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ARAMIS

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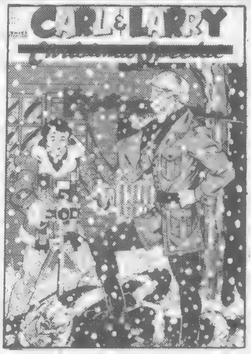

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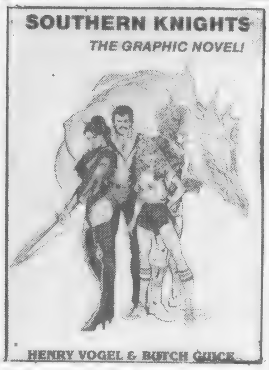
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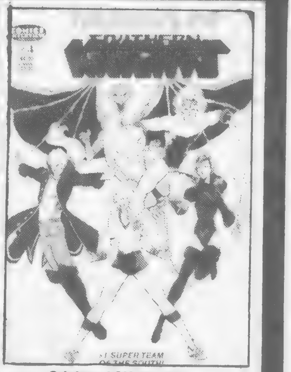
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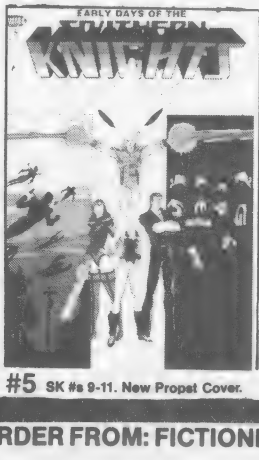
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EARLY DAYS OF THE
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"I'm hoping this is a renaissance of kid-driven comics."

ing these big changes in their line. The whole business may be very different in five years. So it's hard to say.

I'm really glad to be involved in the POWER RANGERS, because I'm hoping that this is a whole new renaissance of kid-driven comics. They've been a presence in the market, but pretty small. With the advent of something as market-powerful as the POWER RANGERS coming into it, everything may be different

DON: *Wouldn't that be nice!*

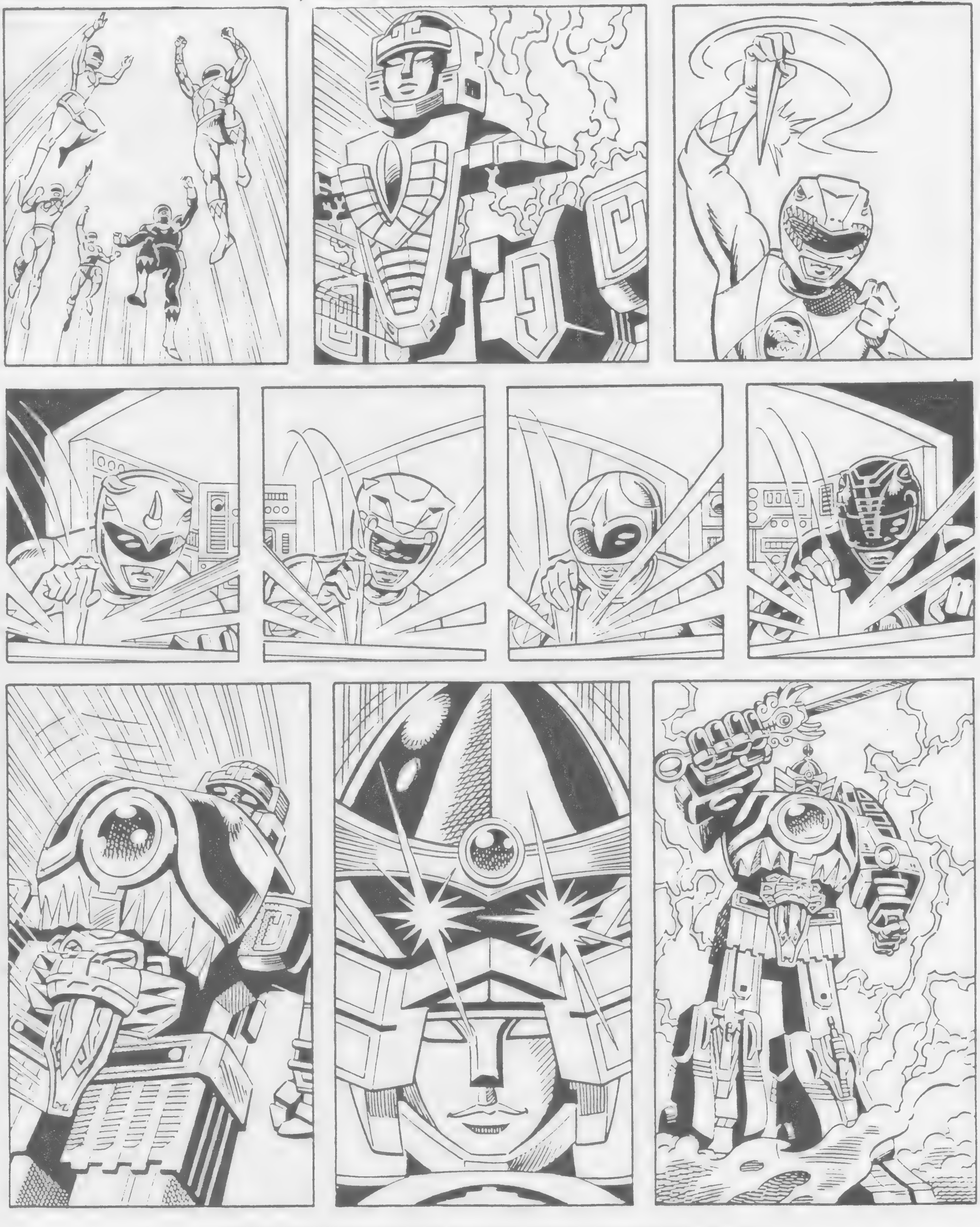
JOHN: It sure would be! Because if you bring a bunch of kids who are basically learning to read into comics, they will be the ones that we'll be entertaining 15 years down the road, maybe 20 or 25.

DON: *I enjoy writing for kids. Not to say that I can't or don't want to do other stuff as well, but I really like writing for kids.*

JOHN: That would be hard for me. I respect what you do, because for me it's hard to connect with what would have tickled me as a kid.

DON: *I just think what would tickle me now. I liked Barks then; I like Barks now. I read to my own kids every night, and I can see what turns them on. It's pretty much what turns on an adult, except that they are willing to accept a little bit more in the way of imagination — and they don't know as much.*

JOHN: So they don't sit there and say "Oh, come on! That's so fake!"



Here's John's version of the assembly of the Thunder-MegaZord.

EDITOR & ART DIRECTOR

“I thought to myself, ‘This is awful! But kids will love it.’”

JOHN CLARK & GARY LEACH

Comics-store owners can now breathe a sigh of relief — no longer will they have to shake their heads in dismay when prospective customers ask about the country's hottest commercial property. As of this month, yes, thanks to Hamilton Comics, there is a MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS comic book — in fact, it's the only non-Marvel, non-Image title in Diamond's Top Ten for November. Here, the comic's main writer conducts a chat with two of the men responsible for bringing kidvid's most morphin-omenal property to our medium. John Clark and Gary Leach, editor and art director, respectively, at Hamilton Comics, Tell All about the Power Rangers . . .

DON MARKSTEIN: *What is this thing called POWER RANGERS? And how did you guys wind up with it?*

JOHN CLARK: About a year and a half ago, **Sheila Clarke** — no relation; she spells it with an E at the end — She's since changed it to **Dennan** — gave me a call. She worked at the TV production company, Saban. She said she was marketing a new television show around to various comic-book publishers, to try to get them interested in publishing it as a comic book. She had, apparently, already approached DC and Marvel and possibly a few others, and they had declined on it.

DON: *Oh, too bad for them!*

JOHN: Yes. She wanted to know if we would be interested in it. In a very atypical move for me — because usually, I have no interest at all in looking at anything like this — I said “I don't know. Maybe. Send me a tape of the show and I'll have a look at it.” And she sent the tape along.

DON: *Was there anything about it, or just sheer chance that made you say that?*

JOHN: It was just kind of a whimsical thing to do. On a whim, I thought, well, we're looking for new properties right now. At that time we were thinking about getting into other markets than Disney, so I thought maybe I should give it a look.

So it came in. It was the first episode, the pilot episode —

DON: *The origin story.*

JOHN: — I had a look at it, and I thought to myself, “This is *awful!*” *(Laughter.)*

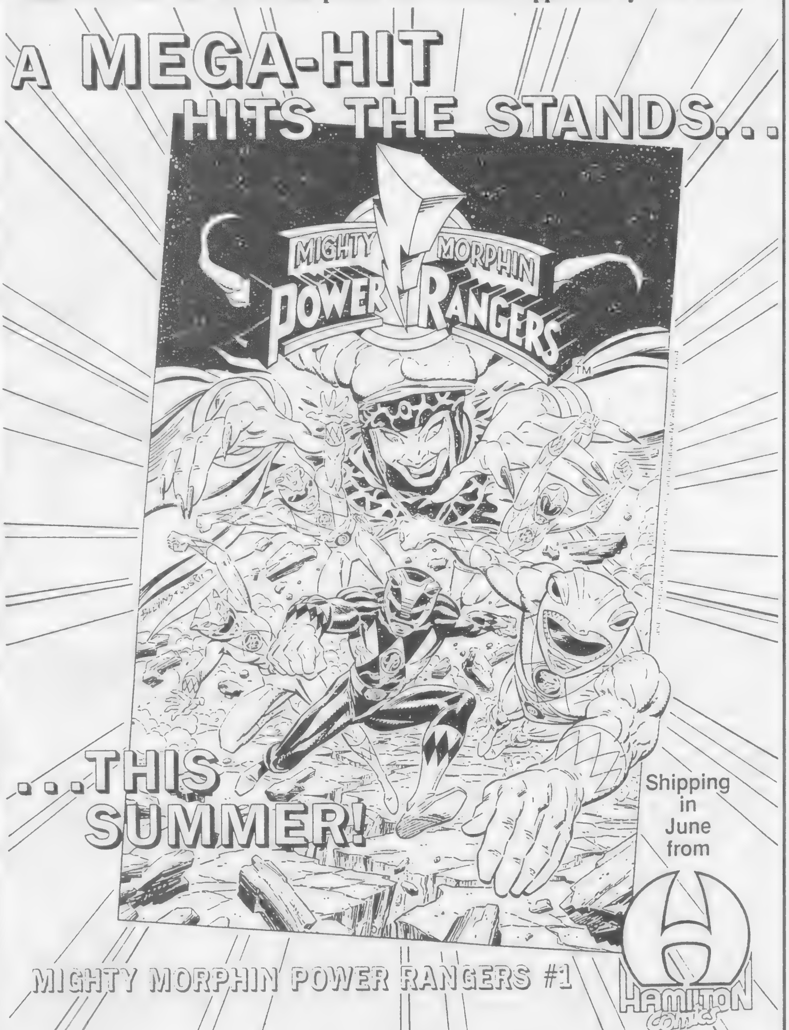
But, I thought, kids are going to love it. I remember the kind of shows my nephew used to love when he was 10 or 12, and it was a lot like those. So I brought it back to the office and handed it to Gary. I said, “You're going to hate this, but I think it's a show that kids will really like.” He had

John & Gary in San Diego.

MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS TM & ©1994 Saban Entertainment, Inc. & Saban International N.V. / Donald Duck & related characters TM & ©1994 The Walt Disney Company / DICK TRACY TM & ©1994 Tribune Media Services, Inc. / EEK! THE CAT TM & ©1994 Fox Children's Network, Inc. / FREAKED TM & ©1993 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

"It just felt like I was too old to appreciate it."

This is the CBG advertisement that heralded the original June '94 solicitation for Hamilton Comics' MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS. As can be seen by the menace opposing them in this Brett Blevins/Terry Austin cover, the Rangers' main foe at that time was Rita Repulssa. She was later supplanted by Lord Zedd.



It probably would become a popular kids' TV show. So we decided to pursue it further. We didn't quite expect it to be as popular as it has become.

DON: *Oh, who could* possibly *have? So, Gary, what did you think of it when you first saw it?*

GARY LEACH: I remembered back when I was a kid, getting up on weekdays and watching SPACE ANGEL cartoons on the Kansas City Station. They'd run one of those every day in the morning, and it was kind of a kick to be able to see that before I had to go to school. The way they planned the POWER RANGERS to play originally was pretty much the same thing. Kids would be able to get up, catch an episode of that, then go off to school — probably a pretty smart move, in terms of marketing. It would probably fly that way. Again, it just felt like I was too old to appreciate it, for what the kids would probably appreciate it for — but there were powerful people and lots of glitz and jumping around, and I thought kids were going to like it.

DON: *So, Marvel and DC passed on it, huh?*

GARY: Originally, they did.

DON: *Well, too bad for them! But I understand Marvel tried to get it later on?*

JOHN: That's what we believe, yeah. They expressed, I guess, a keen interest in it later on. But we had our ink wrapped up. I understand they *are* doing the new one out of Saban, which is, uh —

GARY: V.R. TROOPER.

JOHN: V.R. TROOPER, right. I always want to call it R.V. TROOPER. *(Laughter.)*

DON: *Everybody who has been interviewed on the comic book so far has mentioned this glitch that resulted in the June solicitation being cancelled. What's the story on that?*

JOHN: When we first got the license, we were barrelling in on the opening season, the first episode of the show. And we realized that if we ran as fast as we could, we couldn't come out with a comic book in time for the first show, which was in September of last year. So we did some calculations, figuring, if we run as fast as we can, when *can* we come out with the first comic book? And that was June. So we were plodding along.

Now, in our license with Saban at the time — and this has since been amended — there was a clause in the license that stipulated that things had to be sent in for approval — but that they would take ten business days to make the approval, and that if we hadn't heard from them within ten business days, any material would be deemed approved.

Having never worked with Saban before, when we sent material in and never heard anything about it, I figured that, well, this is a sly way they have of approving things without having to do much work.

(Laughter.) That's what we *thought.* But as it turns out, such was not the case. What was actually happening at their end is that their *one* person who did approvals, and, I guess, was doing quite well up to this point, was suddenly facing a massive hit — that they overnight had hundreds of licensees working on things. With hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of things pouring in to her office for approval, she was just swamped. And things piled up and piled up and piled up, and just never got looked at.

We learned the hard way that the ten-day limit should not be taken seriously. The first book that we came out with did fall short of what they felt the book should be. So we cancelled the whole project and started over from scratch. What we're doing now is the result of all that.

DON: *Now, the first books that you came out with — were those the Fruit of the Loom give-aways?*

GARY: Yes.

JOHN: Yes.

DON: *And you had originally planned for that to be #1 of the regular series?*

GARY: It was a one-off mini-comic to go with Fruit of the Loom kids' underwear. And the story in it was originally going to

"Those robots have a thousand angles, and have to be just

be obliquely referred to in the first regular issue of the POWER RANGERS. Of course, the time frame being what it is. There is no real point to that now. So it is really just a little one-shot.

DON: *A one-shot? I somehow had the impression there was more than one.*

GARY: There was a small set of tiny comic books that we subsequently did into vending machines, still in there. There were five little bitty comic books. They were, again, a separate project, pretty much a one-off too.

DON: *Wow! So there are actually these rare collector's items out there that —*

JOHN: *(Laughter.)*

GARY: *(Laughter.)* Well, it depends on whether you think — Well, the little Fruit of the Loom comic had a pretty giant print run. So did these little bitty comics that go in vending machines. So you kind of have to decide what your definition of "rare" might be.

JOHN: They're "rare" in the sense that they're difficult to run across, I guess. They're not rare in the sense that not many of them were printed.

DON: *Think of all the millions of copies of MARCH OF COMICS that were printed in the 1950s for the shoe stores.*

JOHN: Oh, absolutely! Kids read them and threw them in the gutter.

DON: *That's right. And then those kids grew up. And these kids are going to grow up, and the POWER RANGERS is going to be a big collectible in the early years of the 21st century.*

GARY: Could be.

JOHN: Think so? Some things come and go. I don't think anybody really gives a damn about collecting Transformers today.

DON: *Not today, but that's because the people who liked them when they were kids —*

JOHN: Are not quite old enough yet? Yeah, that's a point.

GARY: I've still got all my Go-Bots. *(Laughter.)*

JOHN: I have my plastic dinosaurs.

DON: *I have my Carl Barks comic books.* (Laughter.)

How did you streamline the process? Did you actually work something out?

GARY: Even though that does get ahead of the story, what essentially came to pass was that I contacted an editor at Western Publishing. They're doing books for Saban. The editor of their books informed me of what she finally did in order to "streamline the process," as you say — which was actually bundle up the material for approval, hop on a plane, go over to Saban, sit down with the person who handles the approvals, and handle them right then and there. Then fly back and proceed.

DON: *Whatever works!*

GARY: Whatever works.

DON: *Boy! So, that's how you do it now?*

GARY: That is currently how we handle the approval process.

DON: *So, everything that actually gets approved, you have sat down across a desk from these people and made them approve it right now or you wouldn't go away?*

GARY: We don't say "make them approve it," *(Laughter)* but we all have definitely agreed that is when things will be reviewed and approved.

JOHN: Except for scripts and synopses. They seem to do quite well with that. We just send those in, or leave them off when we go, and they're very good about getting back to us on scripts.

DON: *Then they have to sit there and look at the artwork?*

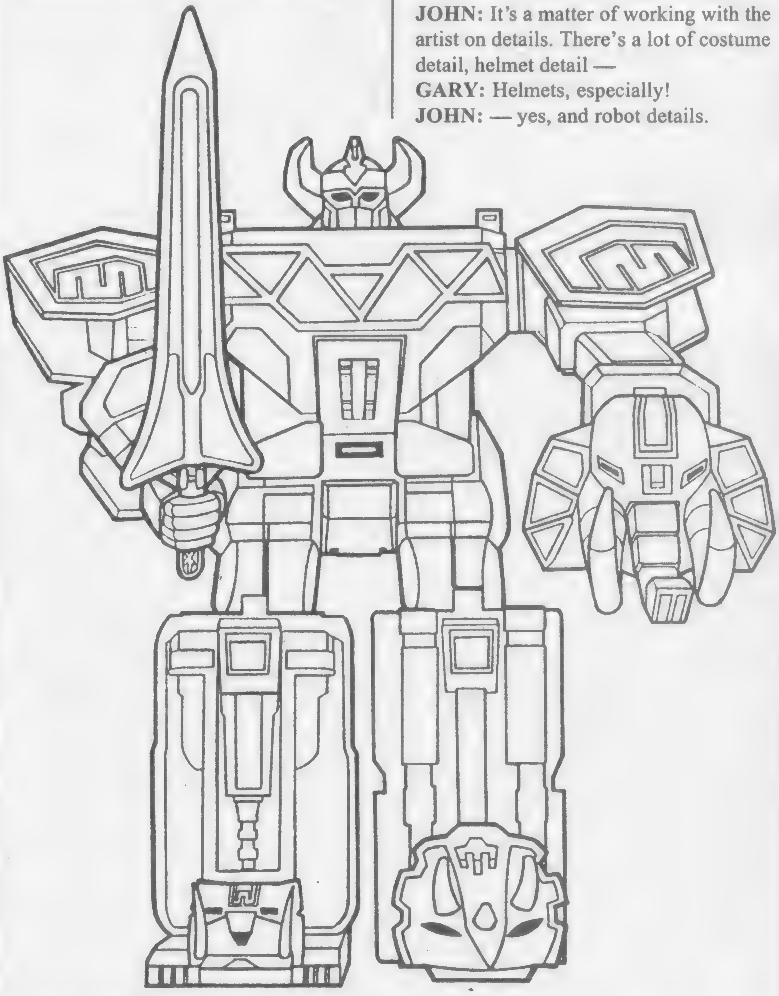
Now, they have disapproved several artists — is that correct? Can you talk about what they're looking for in an artist and who's been approved and who hasn't?

GARY: That's kind of a difficult thing to think on. I can't recollect more than one or two artists who may not have *yet* passed muster. Most everyone we've run through, once we've had them do some model sheets of the characters, and two or three adjustments — most of the artists we have submitted have passed the test. Most of them are currently working on things for the book.

JOHN: It's a matter of working with the artist on details. There's a lot of costume detail, helmet detail —

GARY: Helmets, especially!

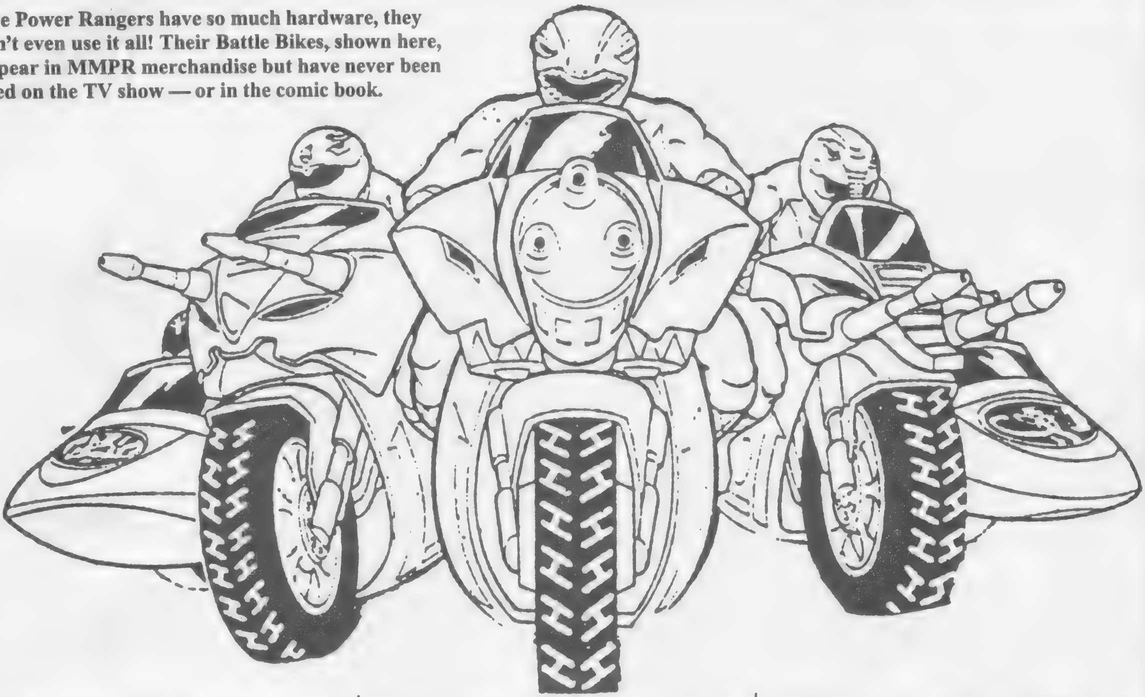
JOHN: — yes, and robot details.



The original MegaZord, shown here in very basic diagram form (this drawing, like that on the facing page, is from a coloring book illustrated by Pattie Silver-Thompson), is only one of the many robots, vehicles and weapons POWER RANGERS creators have to keep straight. This one, which is constructed from the Rangers' individual Zords, has since been supplanted by the Thunder-MegaZord.

right. It's a matter of going back and forth on a model sheet.”

The Power Rangers have so much hardware, they can't even use it all! Their Battle Bikes, shown here, appear in MMPR merchandise but have never been used on the TV show — or in the comic book.



DON: *Robot details! My God!*

JOHN: Yes — they have to be done just so. You know those robots have about a thousand angles on them, and they have to be done just right. It's a matter of going back and forth and back and forth and back and forth with the artist on a model-sheet basis until he gets it right. And then he's instructed to work from that model sheet and try to make it look *that way* every time.

DON: *Yeah, Cam Kennedy was saying in an earlier interview — I think the issue right before this one — that what he really needed was for George Lucas to send him a working model of the Millennium Falcon.*

I can not get their hardware straight! I watch that show every single day, and they've got — they just have more stuff!

JOHN: And that is one of the problems. We can get photo reference on the kids, and we can get photo reference on the helmets — but that robot footage is all Japanese footage and it's difficult to get any photo reference on that. Saban has been having some of their artists come up with line drawings of the various robots. And that's helpful, but they're pretty much promotional line art. It's not really the things drawn from every conceivable angle.

And in a comic book, where things have to be drawn from every conceivable angle, the artist kind of has to come up with his best guess on some of those things.

DON: *Or else just draw it always from the same angle.*

GARY: Which, uh —

DON: *Gets dull?*

JOHN: It'll look like an Ed Wheelan strip after a while.

DON: *I wonder how many readers will get that?*

JOHN: Oh, well.

GARY: A lot of this is from the basic crazy-quilt nature of the TV show itself. There are pieces that come from Japan, pieces that are created here, and it's not always easy to get one's hands on the material you need to cover all the bases.

DON: *The Japanese footage — I am not exactly clear on what is and what isn't. Now, Lord Zedd is an American character — is that correct?*

GARY: No, Lord Zedd was actually introduced by the Japanese footage that they obtained for their second season. Whether or not they're filming sequences with Lord Zedd over here, I'm not exactly sure about.

JOHN: That may or may not be, but in general, whenever you see Zedd in the fortress with Goldar and the other henchmen around him — that's Japanese. Whenever you see robots, or whenever you see the Power Rangers fighting with monsters, that's all Japanese footage. The kids themselves, and the Power Rangers in costume doing incidental things, not fighting the monsters, is the new American footage they use to frame the Japanese footage with.

GARY: Now, I *believe* the footage of the Power Rangers in costume fighting *Putties* is often American.

JOHN: That is also often American, yeah.

GARY: But once they get into their Zords, or once they're fighting a more elaborate monster, or they're in the MegaZord — all of those permutations are from Japan.

DON: *What about the Command Center? That's American, right?*

GARY: That was an American set.

JOHN: Right.

DON: *Rita was terrific. I felt like I could do practically anything with her — have her rolling on the floor with laughter, jumping all around, chewing up the scenery — but Zedd can't move very well. He looks like he's in pain in that suit.*

JOHN: Yeah, he's a much different character than Rita is.

GARY: He can be more flexible visually in comic-book art, visually. You can make him able to move around more fluently.

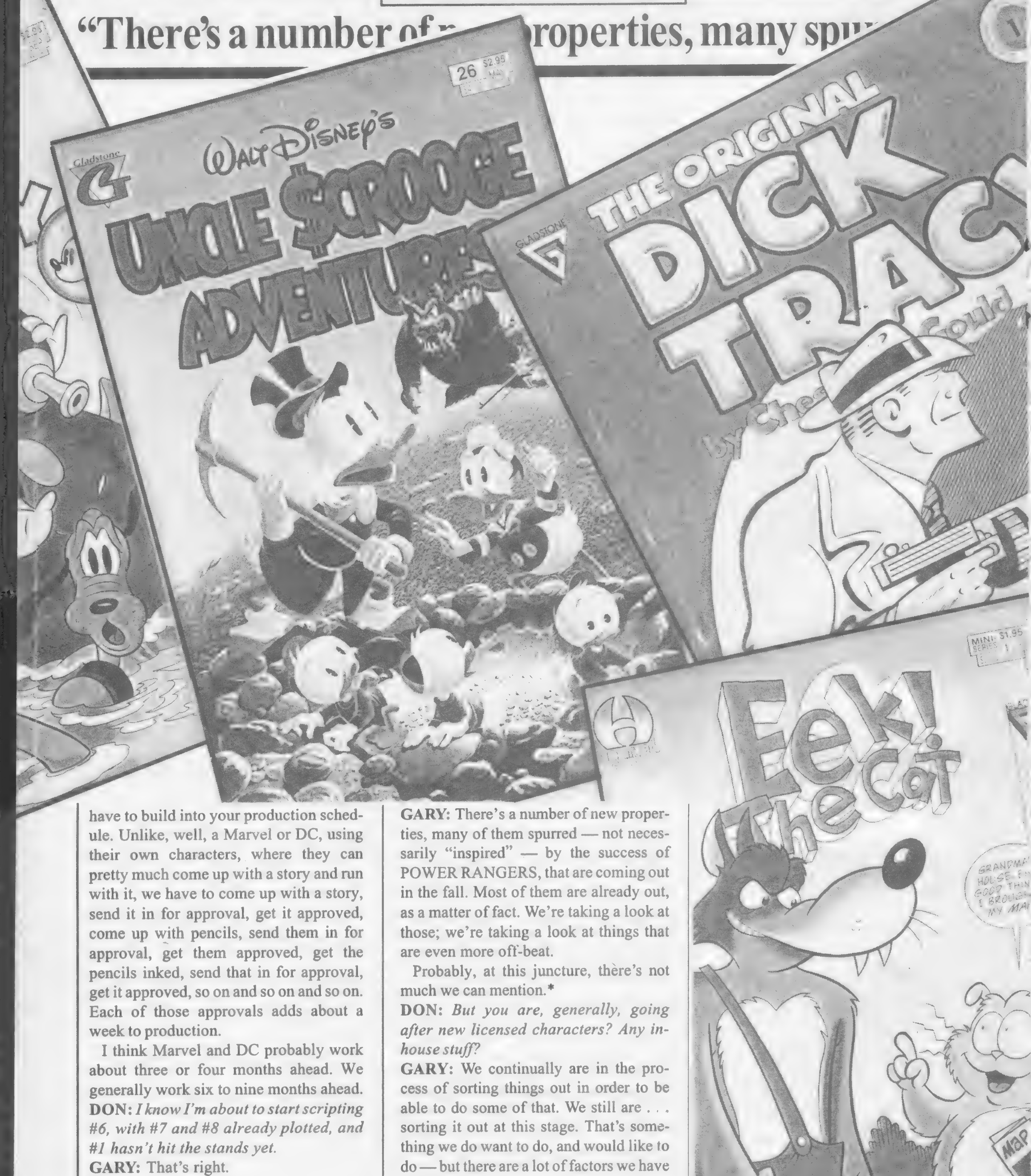
DON: *Well, so does Donald Duck move around more fluently in the comic book. And talks better, too!*

What are some of the difficulties in general, in dealing with licensed characters as opposed to — but you've done practically nothing but *licensed characters, right?*

GARY: Practically.

JOHN: I guess the major thing to keep in mind is the incredible lead time that you

“There’s a number of n roperties, many spu



have to build into your production schedule. Unlike, well, a Marvel or DC, using their own characters, where they can pretty much come up with a story and run with it, we have to come up with a story, send it in for approval, get it approved, come up with pencils, send them in for approval, get them approved, get the pencils inked, send that in for approval, get it approved, so on and so on and so on. Each of those approvals adds about a week to production.

I think Marvel and DC probably work about three or four months ahead. We generally work six to nine months ahead.

DON: *I know I’m about to start scripting #6, with #7 and #8 already plotted, and #1 hasn’t hit the stands yet.*

GARY: That’s right.

JOHN: Exactly.

DON: *Are there any other licensed characters you’re going after, that you can talk about — or just in general, are you going after licensed characters?*

JOHN: What can we talk about?

Well, we have already done EEK! THE CAT, of course. And we keep bandying about the probability of doing more EEK!

GARY: There’s a number of new properties, many of them spurred — not necessarily “inspired” — by the success of POWER RANGERS, that are coming out in the fall. Most of them are already out, as a matter of fact. We’re taking a look at those; we’re taking a look at things that are even more off-beat.

Probably, at this juncture, there’s not much we can mention.*

DON: *But you are, generally, going after new licensed characters? Any inhouse stuff?*

GARY: We continually are in the process of sorting things out in order to be able to do some of that. We still are . . . sorting it out at this stage. That’s something we do want to do, and would like to do — but there are a lot of factors we have to consider before we jump into that lake.

DON: *You mean, when you get ready to do it, you’re going to be doing it whole hog, then?*

GARY: Not necessarily that, but these days, the major consideration is, where are they going to be sold? The direct market has been the major arena for quite some time now as far as comic books go.

***Shortly before going to press, we received word that Hamilton Comics had finalized a deal to license television’s *second*-best-known teenage superhero show — SUPERHUMAN SAMURAI SYBER SQUAD.**

POWER RANGERS. We're taking a look at those."

The great majority of comics published by Gladstone/Hamilton have been of licensed properties. Their best-known titles have been Disney — but as seen here, those are far from the only ones.

The newsstand has faded considerably as a market. It still exists to a certain extent.

But for us to get into the business of producing comics that perhaps are not *guaranteed* to the extent that something like POWER RANGERS is, we have to figure out what are going to be the costs of developing such a project, what kind of print run can we expect, exactly how many copies are we going to be able to move? These considerations are *vital* now to *any* thought of doing anything original.

DON: *The market is very tight.*

GARY: The direct market is no longer the place to expect to get the kind of action, to make something like this viable.

DON: *Are you looking into newsstand distribution, then?*

GARY: Newsstand is one phase of it. There's also the prospect of marketing them more in terms of merchandise, rather than as periodicals, going on a newsstand. More like a product that is racked in stores like K-Mart and Wal-Mart and stuff.

DON: *Like coming out with trade paperback editions of some of your material?*

GARY: Well, not necessarily that. Again, a lot of this is still in the formative stage and it's hard to know exactly what to talk about and what not to talk about. But the idea is getting in front of the audience that comics seems to have lost over the past few decades.

DON: *Yeah, there are millions of people in America who don't even know that comic books are still coming out.*

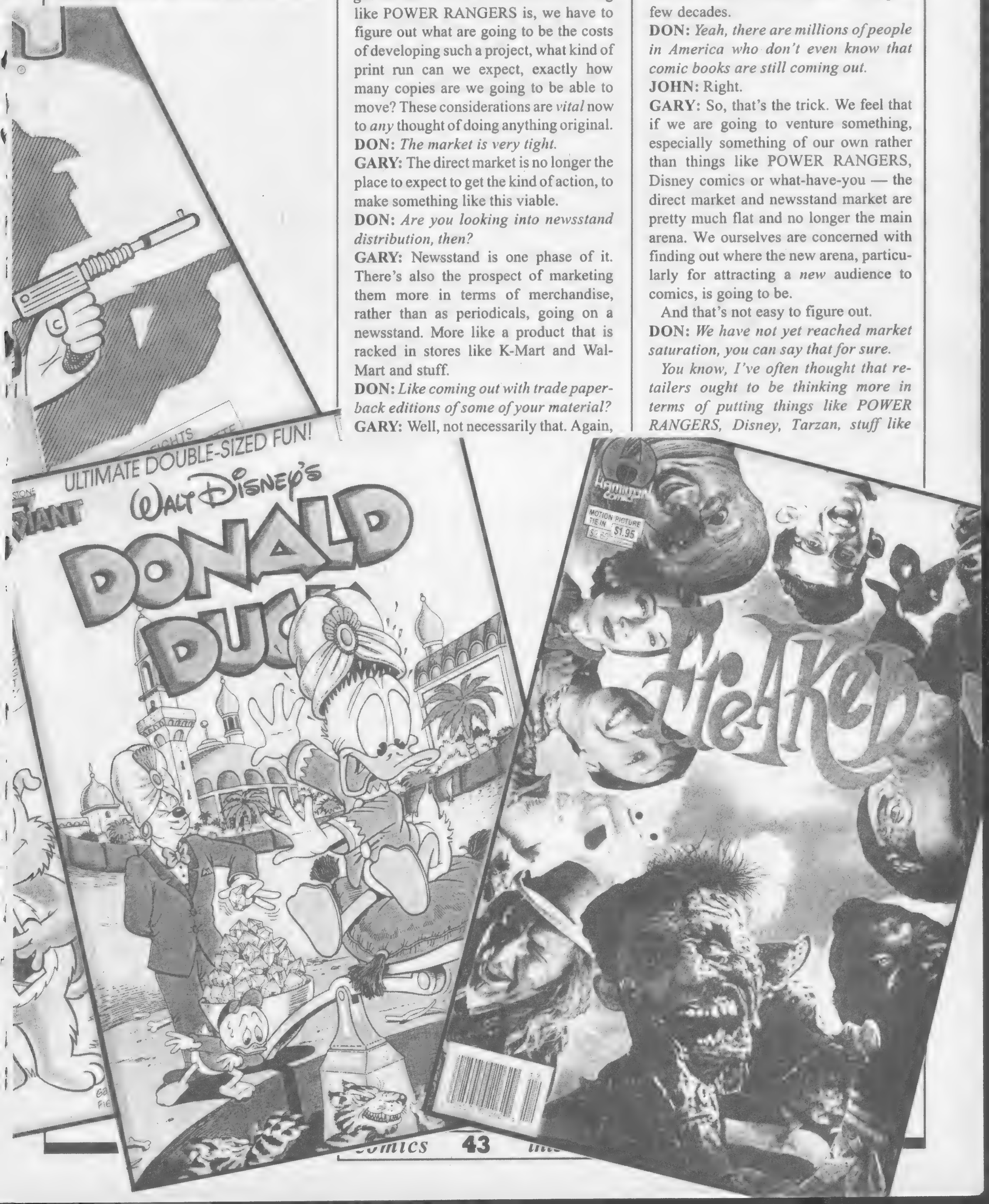
JOHN: Right.

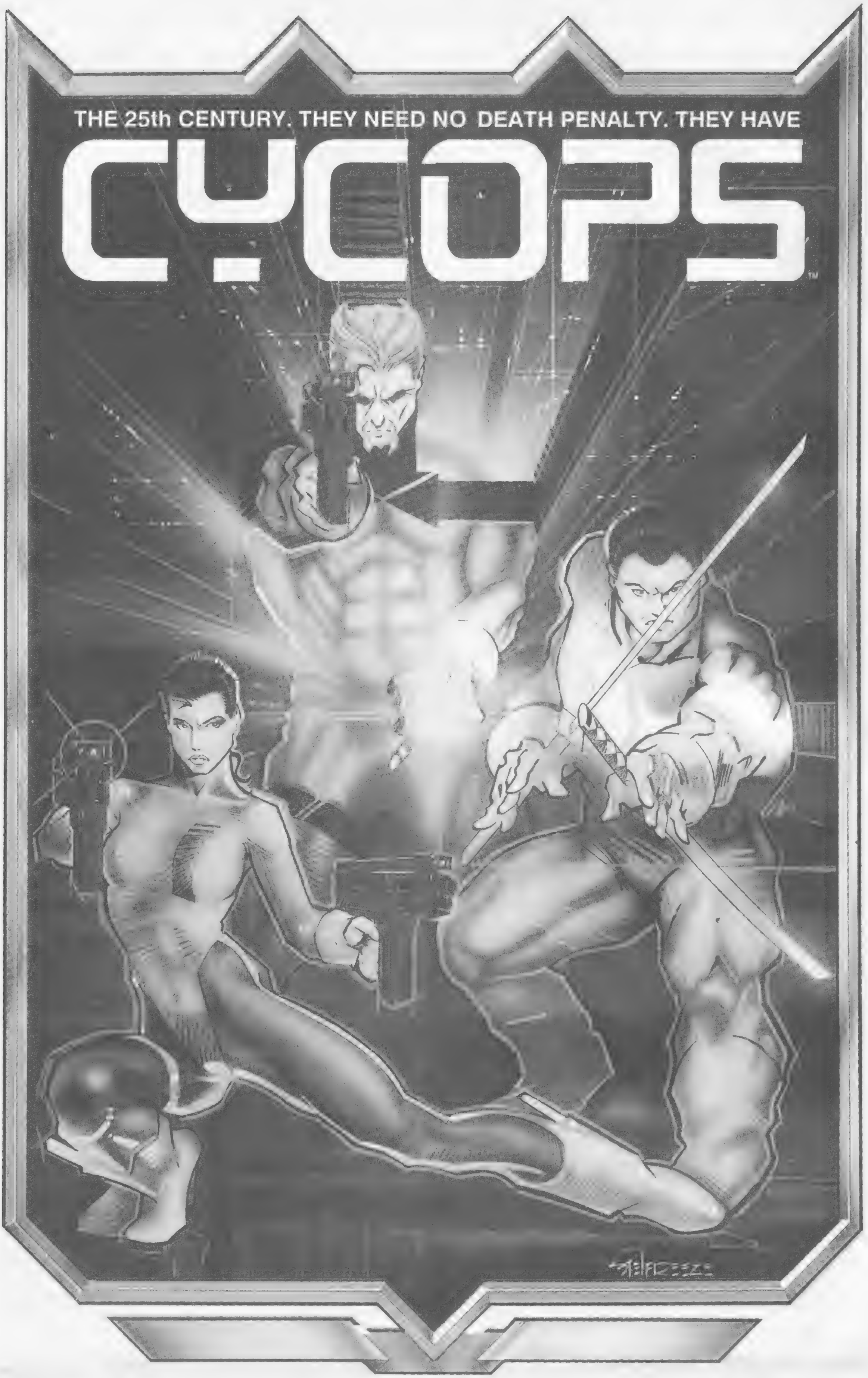
GARY: So, that's the trick. We feel that if we are going to venture something, especially something of our own rather than things like POWER RANGERS, Disney comics or what-have-you — the direct market and newsstand market are pretty much flat and no longer the main arena. We ourselves are concerned with finding out where the new arena, particularly for attracting a *new* audience to comics, is going to be.

And that's not easy to figure out.

DON: *We have not yet reached market saturation, you can say that for sure.*

You know, I've often thought that retailers ought to be thinking more in terms of putting things like POWER RANGERS, Disney, Tarzan, stuff like

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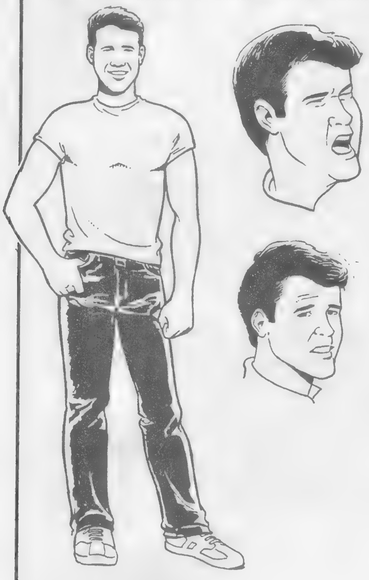
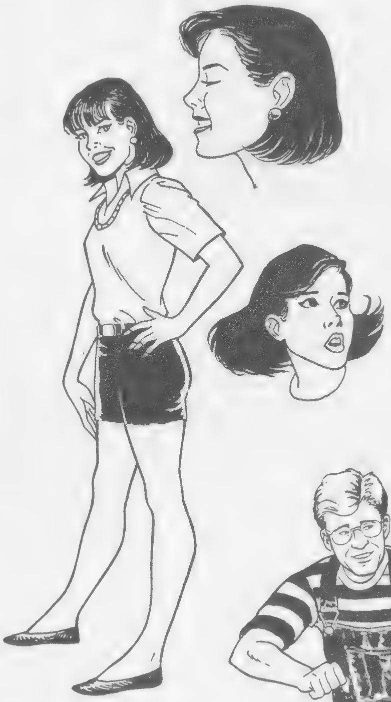
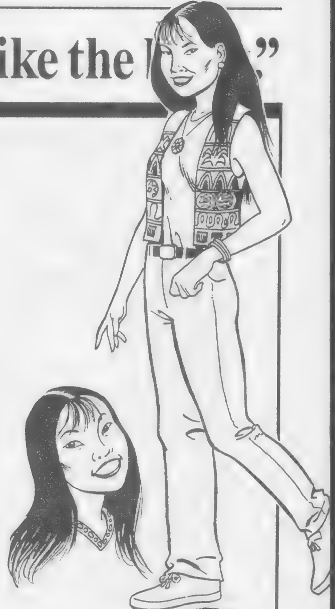
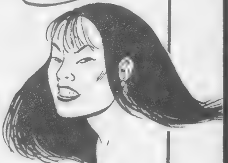
“Anybody who’s a fan of the show ought to like the ”

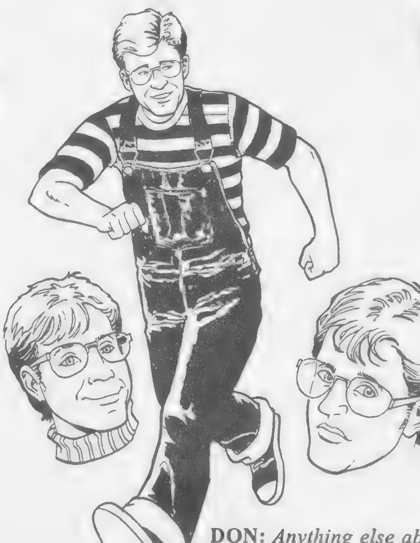
One of the artists coming up in Hamilton Comics’ MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS is Dell/Gold Key veteran Sparky Moore, who drew issue #4. Here are some drawings from Sparky’s model sheets for the five original Power Rangers.

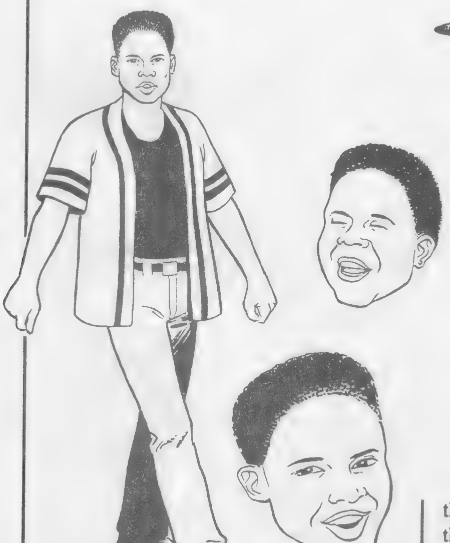












that in the window — rather than Wolverine.

GARY: Yeah, but unfortunately, when you’re in a business where it’s Wolverine that’s paying the bills, making the profits, it’s a very tough thing to convince the store owner, who’s facing these bills month after month and week after week, that he ought to take a chance on something else. Creditors are not as patient as we would like, so even if the retailer truly understands, he’s going to have a tough time explaining he cut into his profits on the X-MEN by trying to market something that’s untried. It’s kind of difficult to explain that to people who really don’t play to the hobby at all.

DON: *What I was thinking, though, was that people who are looking for Wolverine already know a comic-book store is where to go for it. By emphasizing things that are popular outside comics, you can attract a new audience, then try to sell them Wolverine.*

But that’s neither here nor there, I guess. Any closing remarks?

JOHN: That’s always a deadly question to ask. Everybody always says, “Duh, no.” *(Laughter.)* So, let’s see. Uh, duh, no, I don’t have any.

DON: *Anything else about the POWER RANGERS? Anything you can think of that we didn’t cover?*

GARY: Currently, we do have the first issue shipping at the end of November. It’s currently set on a monthly schedule.

JOHN: And we do seem to be on schedule at this point. We’ve got some good artists coming up — **Gray Morrow** on the first issue. **John Heebink,** who’s a real good up-and-comer, who did NICK FURY for Marvel for a time, is doing #2.

GARY: He also did QUASAR.

JOHN: Right.

DON: *He also did EEK! THE CAT.*

GARY: He’s currently doing back-ups in ELVIRA for Claypool.

JOHN: We’ve got some good talent lined up to do it. Anybody who’s a fan of the POWER RANGERS show, they ought to like the book, because the book is pretty close to the show.

AN EXPERT ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT MUSCLES

Dave Prowse, 3-time British Weightlifting champion, demonstrates a super-effective 7-second exercise for building powerful biceps . . . using the new Bullworker with built-in powermeter.

Our files show that thousands of readers like yourself want to build bulging muscles and achieve real physical power like their favorite athletic champions. How to go about it? We decided to ask an expert, Dave Prowse, 3-times British Weightlifting champion and leading fitness expert. Here are his answers.

Q. *What does it take to build muscles?*

A. Basically, it takes exercise. Almost any exercise will help to develop at least some of your muscles if you keep at it long enough and hard enough.

Q. *Isn't there an easier way?*

A. Yes. There is one outstandingly effective training method that is also fast and easy—the one I use and recommend—the new Bullworker system.

Q. *What's that?*

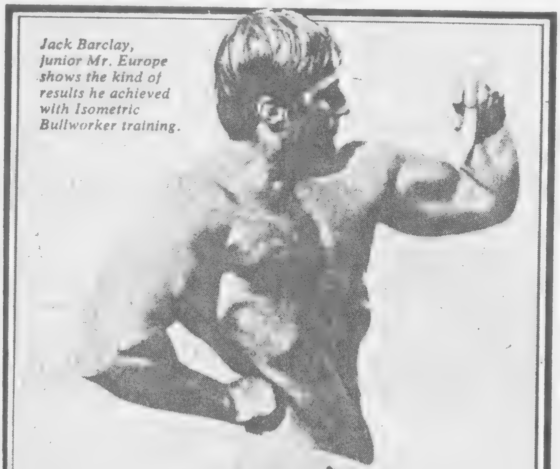
A. The Bullworker is a revolutionary new muscle-building exerciser based on Isometrics, the science that increases strength up to four times faster than conventional methods. In my opinion, it's the most advanced training system in the world today. Many leading athletes use it: World-famous Heavyweight Boxer Muhammad Ali, World Heavyweight Judo Champion Wim Ruska, and Cycling Champion Eddy Merckx, to name only a few.

Q. *How long does Bullworker training take?*

A. Bullworker provides absolutely the fastest kind of exercise possible. In fact, an introduction training program takes only 70 seconds a day. No other system—weightlifting, pulleys, or strenuous calisthenics—can give you results so quickly and easily. On the contrary, many old-fashioned methods take hours of sweaty, boring work each day . . . and it's often months before you begin to see improvements. Busy professional athletes and champions don't have time for that. Nobody does.

Q. *How long does it take before you begin getting results?*

A. With the Bullworker, you can actually begin to see and measure the positive results right from the very first day! Thanks to a built-in measuring device called the Powermeter. After every exercise you just check the reading to see exactly how much your strength has increased from the day before. There's no guesswork involved. Isometric Bullworker training can increase your power at the amazing rate of up to 4% per week! That means a 50% increase in strength in the first three months alone. And I've known many young men who have gone on to double and even triple their strength.

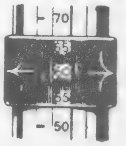


Jack Barclay, Junior Mr. Europe shows the kind of results he achieved with Isometric Bullworker training.

Q. *What do those figures mean in visual terms?*

A. They mean that in as little as 14 days you can actually begin to *see* muscle growth in a mirror and *verify* it with a tape measure. Every week thereafter brings ever faster growth.

Built-in Powermeter
You can actually measure your musclepower g-r-o-w-i-n-g from the very first day.



Q. *But to get such impressive results, don't you have to work very hard?*

A. Absolutely not. That's the outstanding advantage of Isometric training . . . it's so amazingly easy! Each "Static-power" Isometric exercise takes *only 7 seconds,* and you barely have to move. It's not even necessary to disrobe. The Bullworker is so light and compact, it can be used at home, in the office, anywhere . . . even while watching TV! It's a great improvement over bulky, expensive weights, bicycle machines, pulleys, etc.

Q. *Can Bullworker training even develop bodies which are weak and skinny, or fat and flabby?*

A. Definitely! It's been proven by thousands of men of every shape, size and age all over the world. Bullworker training helps transform weak, thin arms into rippling, muscular pillars of strength, build broad, powerful shoulders, turn flat, shallow chests into deep, manly ones, forge loose stomach flab into steel-hard, well-defined muscle . . . build that "V" shape of a real athlete, develop sturdy, contoured thighs and calves . . . And all this in *record time!*

What's more, I've known skinny, shy fellows who, after just a few short weeks with Bullworker, turned into real go-getters . . . every inch a man . . . bowling girls over with their dynamism, confidence, and new found power! You really have to see the remarkable effects of Bullworker for yourself to believe them!

Q. *How can our readers find out more about the Bullworker, perhaps actually try it for themselves?*

A. I understand that the Bullworker distributor in the USA is now making it available—free—on a two week home-trial basis in order to introduce it to the general public. If your readers are interested in developing their bodies, in building muscles and strength faster than ever before possible, I suggest that they contact the US distributor for full details.

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LAST WORD

***Comics Interview* 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001**

DARTH VADER GOES COUNTRY

Dear DAK & Julia,

I haven't struggled through all of the current CI yet, but I liked the double-Brit interview (Julia and **Dave Prowse**). Here's a **Dave Prowse** advertisement, from a 1973 wrestling mag. It comes with a **Dave Prowse** "interview," too . . . although how authentic it is only Dave could say! Wonder if the interviewer stuck a mike in his face while Dave was holding him at arm's length by his chin??

However, **Mr. Prowse** . . . if you think we don't remember who played 007 in those James Bond flicks, you're outta your tree! **Sean Connery** *is* James Bond, **Timothy Dalton** is a more-than-acceptable substitute, and **Roger Moore** . . . is **Roger Moore.** And, yes, we do remember who played certain of the villains, such as **Joseph Wiseman, Gert Froebe, Adolfo Celi, Richard Kiel, Harold Sakata, Charles Grey** (who also, besides playing Blofeld, first appeared as a fellow-agent of Bond's who gets killed), **Telly Savalas, Woody Allen** . . .

Woody Allen??!!

I'm not feeling too pleased about **Bill Chadwick's** "passable" rating of the **Dan Adkins** interview. Good grief, what does he want?? I did a historical overview of the man's career, got you some behind-the-scenes info on Dan himself, and got him to give with some fun stories on the people he worked with. I think it worked out fine. Does Bill think that I should interview somebody connected with BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD, maybe?

And as for **Chadwick's** country conversion, glad to have you aboard, bubba! I don't watch country videos (or *any* kind of videos — they're all repetitious and boring), but he's right about **Lorrie Morgan's** great looks and shape, as well as singing voice; she recently did a bikini shot for the cover of COUNTRY WEEKLY, and it wasn't the article about **Billy Dean's** new video that got me to buy *that* issue!

Highly recommended, Bill: **Billy Joe Shaver's** TRAMP ON YOUR STREET which will rock your socks off, **Lyle Lovett's** JOSHUA JUDGES RUTH, and **Nanci Griffith's** OTHER VOICES OTHER ROOMS.

And if **Chadwick** has gone country . . can **Kraft** be far behind???

Lou Mougin
1406 Fourth St.
Graham, TX 76450

INTERVIEW welcomes your thoughts and comments in the Last Word. Send your correspondence to: DAK, COMICS INTERVIEW, 234 Fifth Ave., Suite 301, New York, NY 10001, or fax your letter to (706) 782-6625. Please include your name and address.

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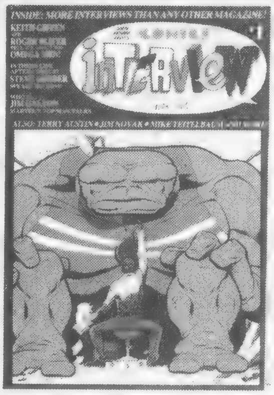
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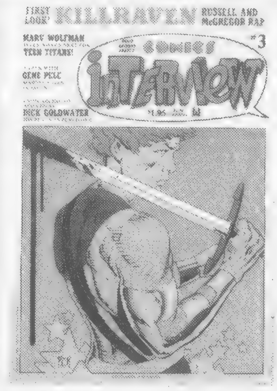
#1-$5.00 **Keith Giffen** on the making of THE OMEGA MEN — **Steve Gerber** speaks out on comics — X-MEN inker **Terry Austin** talks — Marvel's top man, **Jim Galton**, tells all — and much more in this premiere issue!

FIRST LOOK!
MILLER'S RONIN
COMICS
INTERVIEW

#2-$5.00 **Miller** raps about RONIN — **Mark Evanier** shares secrets of **Kirby's** NEW GODS — **Steve Gerber** asks **Will Meugniot** about DNAGENTS — **Gene Simmons** of KISS on comics — more! Cover by **Frank Miller.**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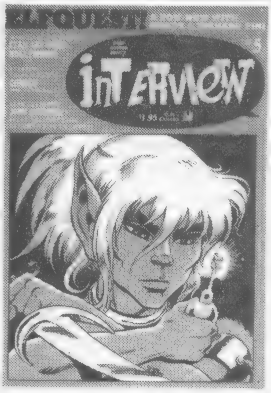
KILLRAVEN
RUSSELL AND McGREGOR RAP
MARV WOLFMAN
TEEN TITANS!
GENE PELC
DICK GOLDWATER
COMICS
INTERVIEW
#3

#3 COUNTS AS FIVE **Don McGregor** & **Craig Russell** on KILLRAVEN — Origins of NEW TEEN TITANS told by **Marv Wolfman** — **Howard Chaykin** on AMERICAN FLAGG — French comics by **Neal Adams** — Cover by **Russell.**

COMICS
INTERVIEW

#4 COUNTS AS FIVE **Starlin** speaks about **WARLOCK, CAPTAIN MARVEL & DREADSTAR — DC's Dick Giordano**, part 1 — from **Foster** to **Frazetta**, the last **Roy G. Krenkel** interview — Cover by **Starlin.**


ELFQUEST!
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INTERVIEW
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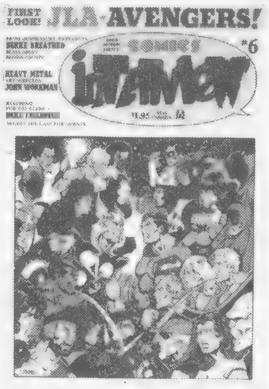
#5-$5.00 **Wendy & Richard Pini** — inside ELFQUEST, part 1 — **Stan Lee**, straight from the shoulder — DC's **Dick Giordano** part 2 — Origins of COMICO. Cover by **Wendy Pini.**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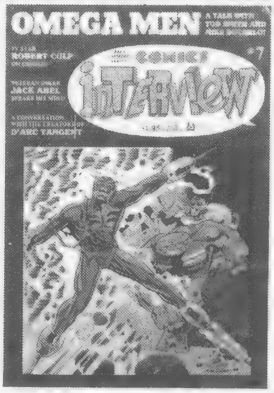
JLA-AVENGERS!
BERKE BREATHED
HEAVY METAL
JOHN WORKMAN
COMICS
INTERVIEW
#6

#6 COUNTS AS 3 **George Perez** & **Roy Thomas** tell all about JLA/AVENGERS feud — inside ELFQUEST, part 2 — **Berke Breathed** blabs about BLOOM COUNTY — more! Awesome cover by **Perez!**


OMEGA MEN
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JACK ABEL
D'ARC TANGENT
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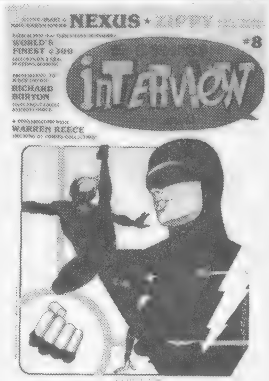
#7

#7-$5.00 Artist **Tod Smith** — inker **Mike DeCarlo**, too — D'ARC TANGENT — TV star **Robert Culp** talks about comics — Marvel artist **Jack Abel** OMEGA MEN cover by **Smith & DeCarlo!**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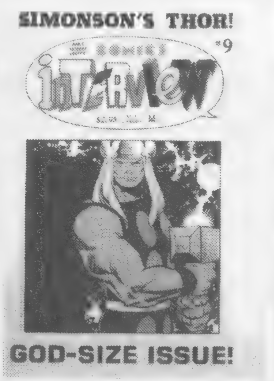
#8 $5.00 **Mike Baron** and **Steve Grant** discuss NEXUS, WHISPER and BADGER — **Bill Griffith** talks about ZIPPY THE PINHEAD — **Richard Burton** on British comics — plus more! Cover by **Steve Rude.**


SIMONSON'S THOR!
COMICS
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#9
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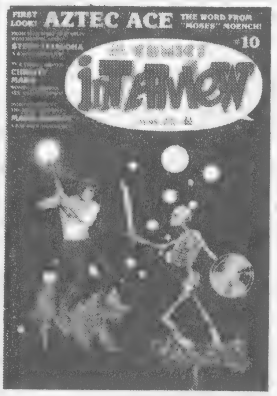
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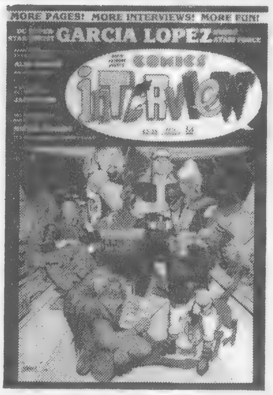
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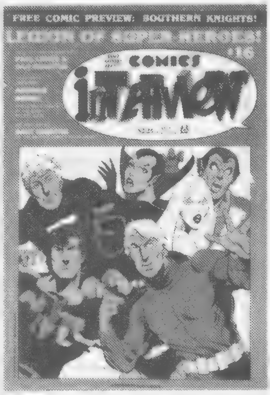
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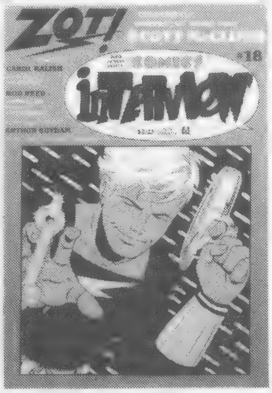
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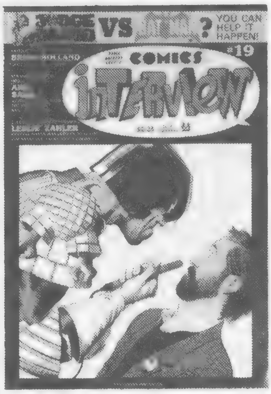
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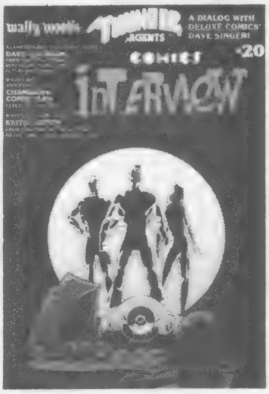
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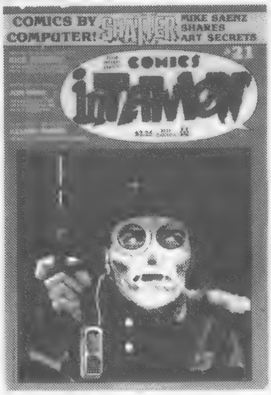
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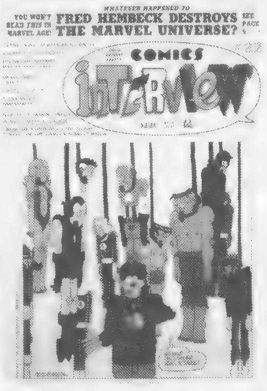
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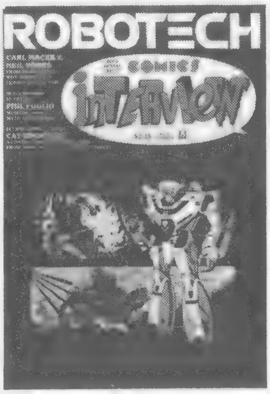
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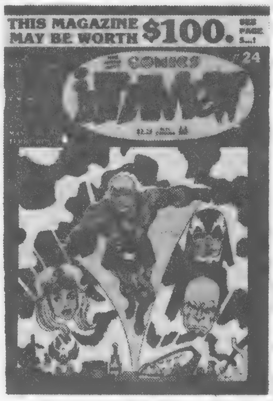
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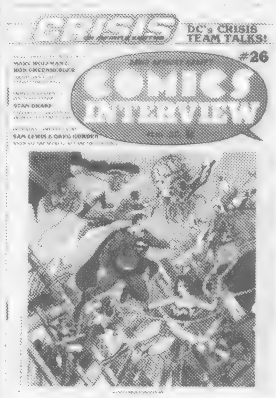
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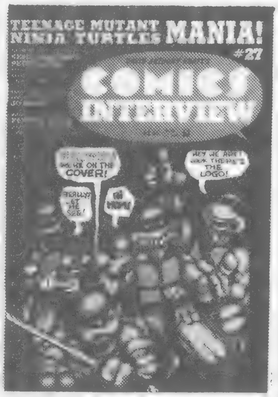
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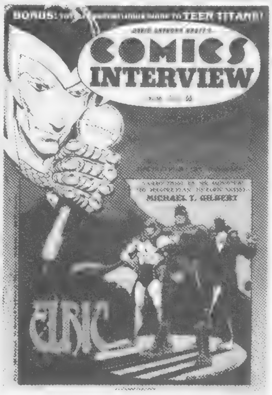
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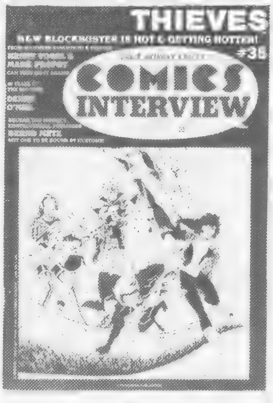
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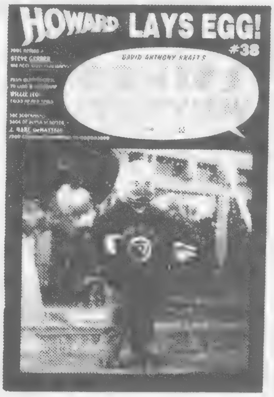
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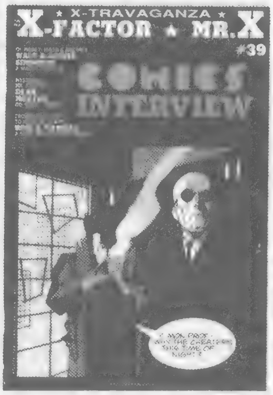
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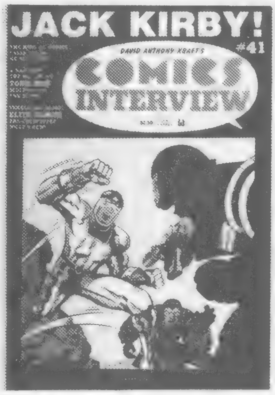
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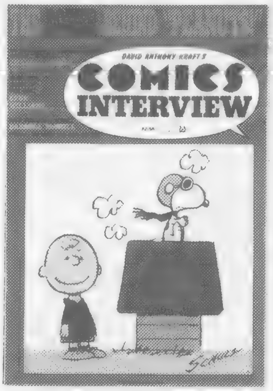
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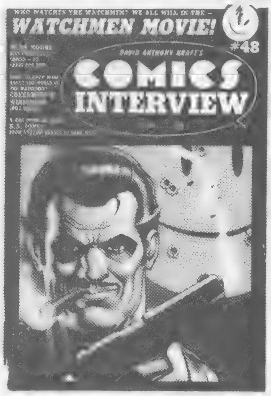
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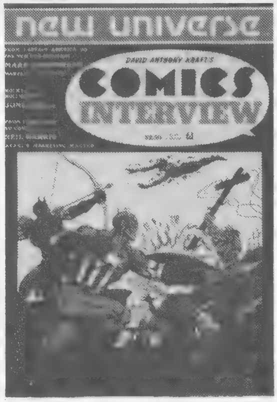
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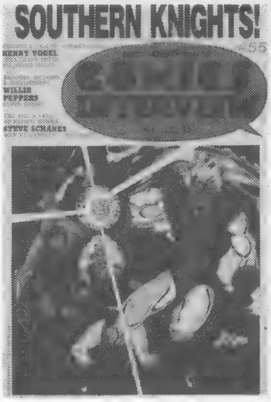
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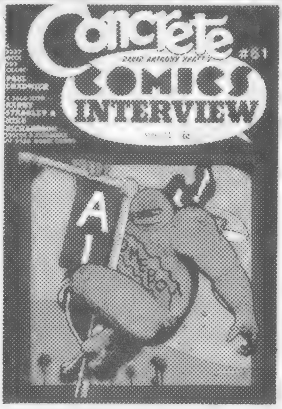
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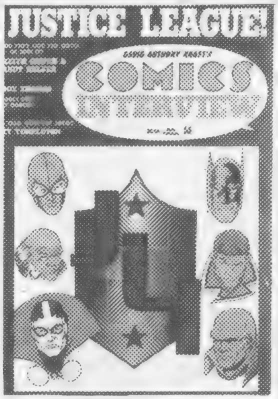
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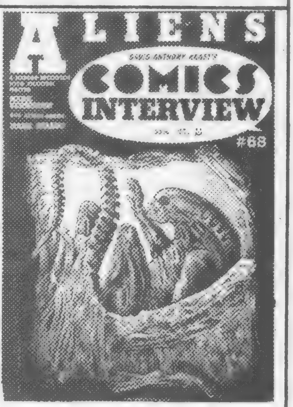
ALIENS
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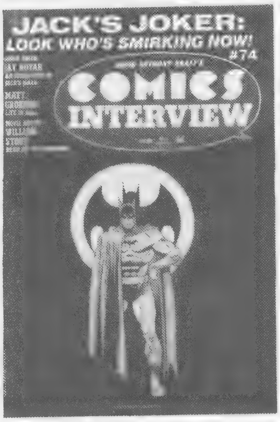
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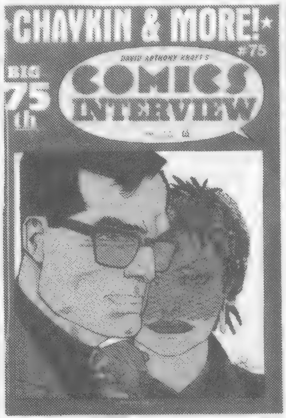
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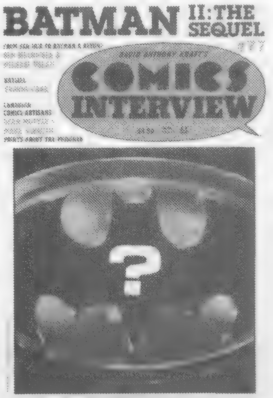
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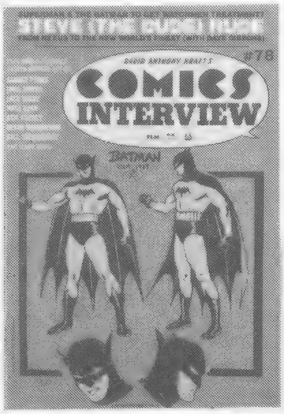
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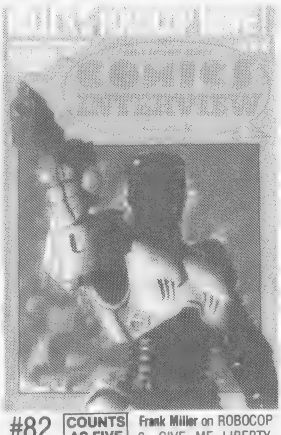
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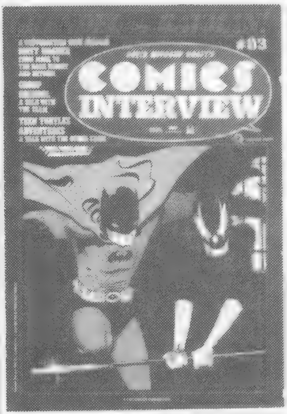
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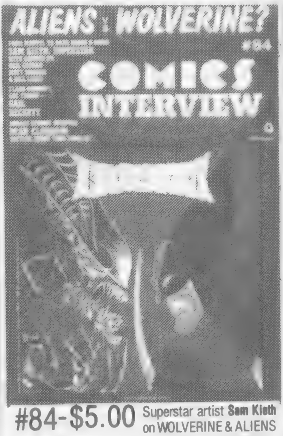
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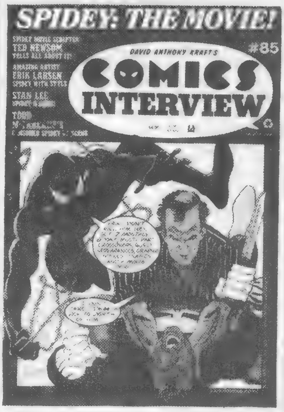
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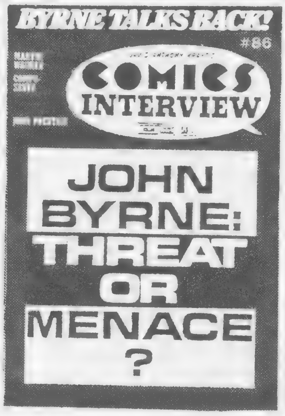
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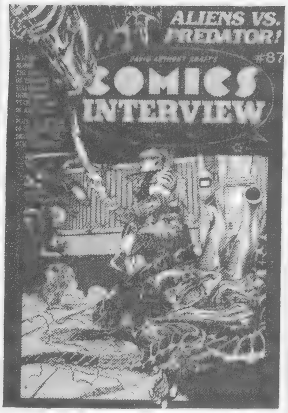
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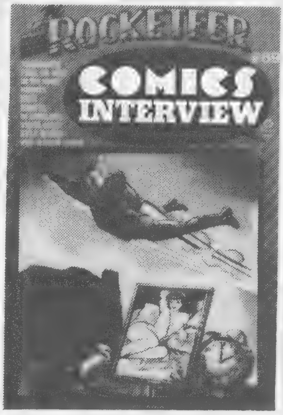
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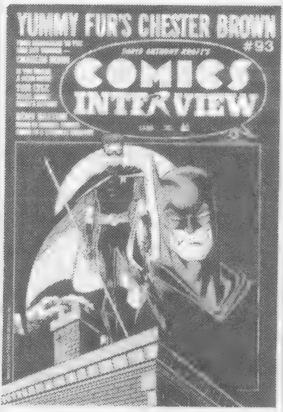
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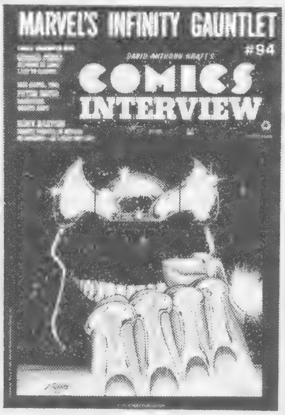
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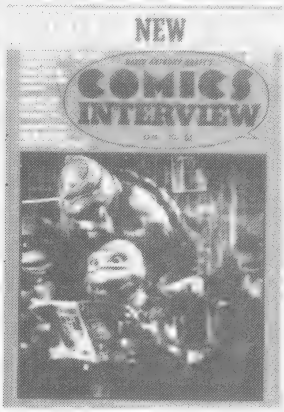
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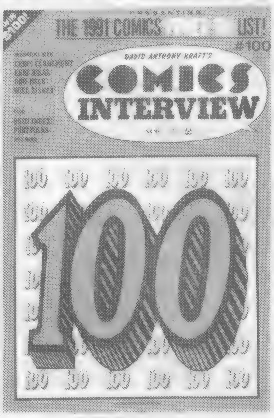
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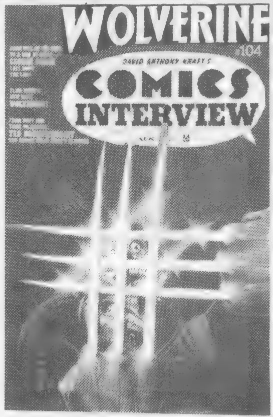
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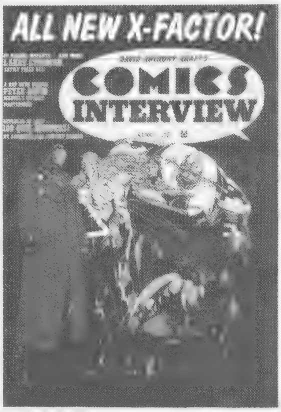
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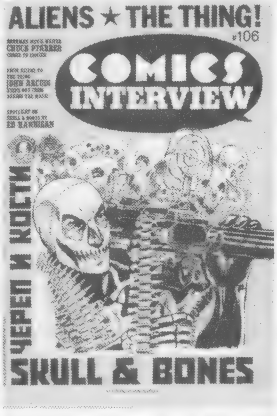
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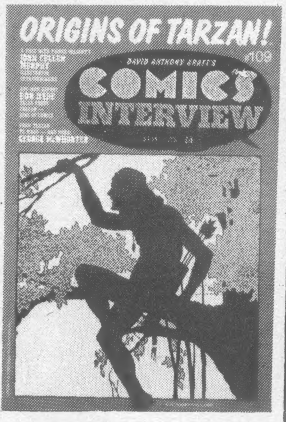
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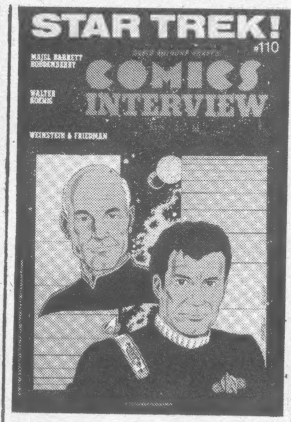
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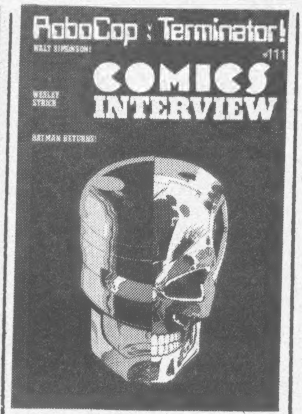
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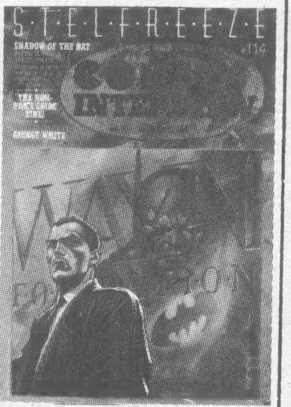
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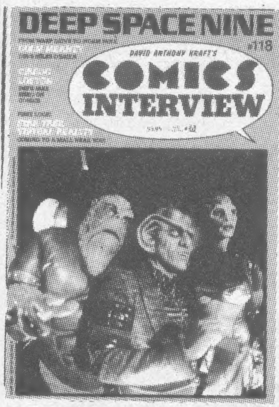
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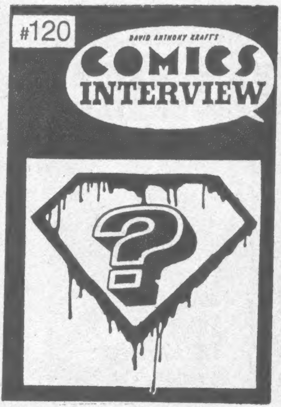
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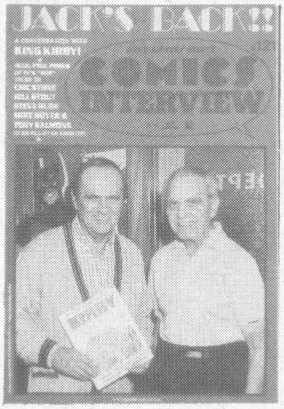
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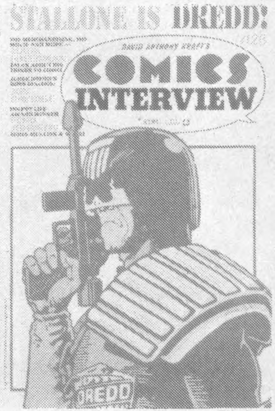
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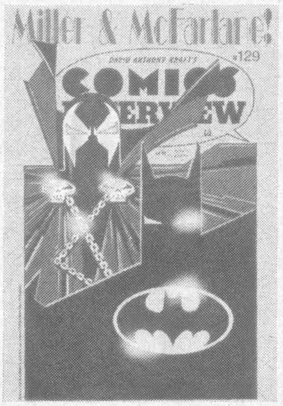
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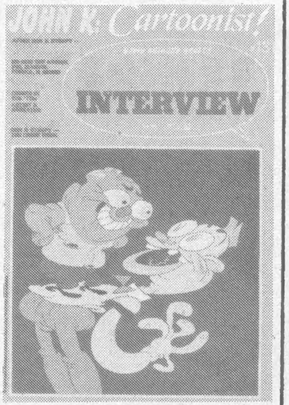
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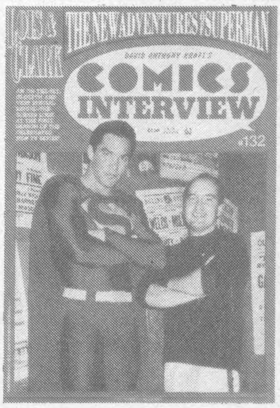
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